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Masters of AMERICAN LITERATURE

VOLUME TWO

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PREFACE

Masters of American Literature has grown out of the increasing conviction of the editors over a period of years that the most effective way to teach American literature to undergraduates is to concentrate on the authors and works of greatest significance. After teaching the usual "shot-gun" course, with a scattering of the ammunition in all directions, they have observed the quickening of interest in their classes when their students read and discussed a single author until they had gained more than a superficial acquaintance with his life, his personality, his thought, and the quality of his literary productions.

One of the better conventional texts in the field has no less than eighty-two authors in one volume, and nearly as many in the second volume. Miscellanies of this type with a sampling of twice as many authors are not rare. The editors believe that a course in American literature should teach more than a list of names and titles. Accordingly, they have limited these volumes to a few authors of major importance. Moreover, they have endeavored to represent a wide range of an author's works, and to print "wholes" rather than "snippets." Occasionally deletions have had to be made, but usually in such cases bracketed notations provide a synopsis of the omitted portions of the text, thus maintaining the continuity.

This anthology is devoted to "masters," but not exclusively to "masterpieces." By a "master" is meant an author not only expert in his craftsmanship but also one who has made a significant contribution to the cultural and literary history of his period. Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards have been included, for example, not merely because of their powers of expression but also because of their intellectual pre-eminence in their day. A number of other non-

professional writers, like Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Woodrow Wilson would have been included if space had permitted.

The editors have attempted to provide adequate factual and critical introductions. Perhaps not all teachers and critics will agree with some of their interpretations, but they have guarded as best they could against eccentricity and minority opinions, meanwhile following, so far as possible, the leading authorities in the field. The introductory essays are intended to provide essential background information for the student, and to free class time for fruitful examination of primary texts and still leave room for the instructor to supplement these essays with his own lectures. The editors have tried to avoid over-annotation, while giving sufficient information in the footnotes to save the student the time and annoyance of constantly leafing through dictionaries of allusion, biography, mythology, quotation, etc. The bibliographies have been selected with great care, and are up-to-date. At the end of each selection, the date of composition (if known) is printed on the left; the date of publication on the right. Unless indicated otherwise, the text is always that of the accepted or last edition receiving the author's final revision or authorization.

This anthology represents the joint labor and judgment of the two editors; but Mr. Pochmann has assumed the main responsibility for the first volume, and Mr. Allen for the second. Both editors have been constantly assisted by the College Department of The Macmillan Company. Professor Oscar Cargill has given valuable criticism of the manuscript. Mr. Arthur Zeiger has generously assisted Mr. Allen in proofreading and verifying bibliographical details.

H.A.P. and G.W.A.

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Masters of AMERICAN LITERATURE

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER (1807-1892)

The name of John Greenleaf Whittier is usually associated with Longfellow, Lowell, and Holmes, Whittier's New England contemporaries, whom he deeply admired and numbered among his friends, especially the latter two. Certainly in their intellectual and moral heritage these men had much in common; but there was also a wide social and cultural gulf separating the folksy Quaker poet from the "Brahmins" of Boston and Harvard. Indeed, in his humble origin, his acquaintance with simple men through intimate and lifelong association, and his profound knowledge of the life and character of his region, he achieved in reality the ambitions which that much greater poet, Walt Whitman, could attain only in theory and vicarious dreams. (Like most common men of the period, too, Whittier was never able to understand or appreciate Whitman.)

Despite the fact that today Whitman's reputation is near the zenith and Whittier's hanging low on the horizon, the latter was not without poetic genius. But it was genius with a narrower range, more dependent upon ancestry, region, events of the times, and contemporary taste. His reputation has declined because most of the causes for which he fought have ceased to agitate the national consciousness, and the simple rural and village experiences to which he gave lyric utterance seem naïve and antiquated in the turbulent twentieth century. Nevertheless, Whittier is still a writer of importance for the modern student of American life and poetry. During the greatest crisis in the history of the Republic he hammered out poems as weapons for a moral crusade, and no other literary figures except possibly Lowell and Harriet Beecher Stowe exerted so wide an influence in the crusade against slavery. Of more permanent literary importance, however, are the simple lyrics about barefoot boys, country customs and superstitions (like "telling the bees"), and the cozy domestic pleasures of a snowbound farm home. Contemporary New Englanders took these songs to their hearts. And in modern times no one but Robert Frost has succeeded so well in capturing in poetic form the unsophisticated life of New England country folk.

Thomas Whittier came to America in 1638, with two uncles and a distant relative, Ruth Green, whom he later married. In 1647 they settled about five miles from the village of Haverhill, on East Meadow Brook. Of the ten children, five were boys, each over six feet in height. In 1688 the family moved to a new house about half a mile from the old, on the banks of a little stream called Country Brook. There for four generations the youngest son had stayed on at the old homestead, each marrying a farmer's daughter, until the bachelor poet inherited the ancient house and run-down farm.

These Essex County farmers early became Quakers and champions of religious freedom, another family inheritance which helped to shape the mind and character of the future poet. In 1652 two unlicensed exhorters, Joseph Peasley and Thomas Macy, were arrested for holding religious services in absence of the minister. They were probably suspected of being Quakers, a sect greatly abhorred by the orthodox Puritans, and they did later join the Society of Friends. A neighbor who protested the arrest was himself disfranchised and fined, an injustice which stirred other neighbors, including Thomas Whittier, to further protests. They, too, were disfranchised, Whittier until 1666. But this experience cemented the friendship of the Whittiers and the Peasleys, and in 1694 Thomas's son, Joseph, married Mary Peasley, daughter of the unlicensed exhorter—and later generations of Whittiers were loyal Quakers, down to the poet, who still used "thee" and "thou" to his friends.

From Thomas Whittier also came many of the stories and traditions about the Indians which the poet used in verse and prose. The frontier town of Haverhill remained on friendly terms with the Indians, who fished and hunted at their pleasure in the region until 1675, when friction arose between them and the settlers. Thomas Whittier, however, had received the Indians in his home on East Meadow Brook for many years, and he was never forced to seek protection for himself or his family in the houses which he had himself helped to fortify. During these Indian troubles he built his new house (1688) on Country Brook, and according to family tradition

the savages in their war paint would pause while passing the house at night to look through the window at the firelight in the big open fireplace of the kitchen

To this same frame house on Country Brook the forty-four-year-old father of the poet, John, brought his twenty-three-year-old bride, Abigail Hussey, in 1804. Here John Greenleaf Whittier was born in 1807, the second of four children. Perhaps the discrepancy in the ages of his parents explains in part why young John always turned to his mother rather than his father for sympathy in his literary ambitions. The family was poor, and only once in his youth did the future poet visit Boston, forty miles from Haverhill. On this occasion the country boy, though proud of his new homespun suit and "boughten buttons," was confused by the noise and crowds of the city and was glad to return to his quiet farm home.

In old age Whittier wrote to a correspondent regarding his youth:

. . . I found about equal satisfaction in an old rural home, with the shifting panorama of the seasons, in reading the few books within my reach, and dreaming of something wonderful and grand somewhere in the future. . . I had at that time a great thirst for knowledge and little means to gratify it. The beauty of outward nature impressed me, and the moral and spiritual beauty of the holy lives I read of in the Bible and other good books also affected me with a sense of my falling short and longing for a better state.

In *Yankee Gypsies* Whittier tells how he first heard of Robert Burns, the poet who influenced him most in his early literary ambitions:

One day we had a call from a "pawky auld carle" of a wandering Scotchman. To him I owe my first introduction to the songs of Burns. After eating his bread and cheese and drinking his mug of cider, he gave us Bonny Doon, Highland Mary, and Auld Lang Syne. He had a rich full voice and entered heartily into the spirit of his lyrics.

At the age of fourteen Whittier's schoolmaster, Joshua Coffin, lent him a volume of Burns' poems, and he began at once to learn the Scottish dialect. The poet later remembered this volume as "about the first poetry I had ever read—with the exception of the Bible, of which I had been a close student,—and it had a lasting influence upon me." After reading Burns the farm boy began to make rhymes himself and to live "in a world of fancy."

Young Whittier also became acquainted with an American imitator of Burns, a homespun poet living

in Windham, New Hampshire, named Robert Dinsmore. The debt to Dinsmore was repaid gracefully in a memorial essay, "Robert Dinsmore," in Whittier's *Prose Works*.

He tells us of his farm life, its joys and sorrows, its mirth and care, with no embellishment, with no concealment of repulsive and ungraceful features. Never having seen a nightingale, he makes no attempt to describe the fowl, but he has seen the night-hawk, at sunset, cutting the air above him, and he tells of it. Side by side with his waving corn-fields and orchard-blossoms we have the barnyard and pigsty. Nothing which was necessary to the comfort and happiness of his home and avocation was to him "common or unclean."

Whittier recalls that "the last time I saw him, he was chaffering in the market-place of my native village, swapping potatoes and onions and pumpkins for tea, coffee, molasses, and, if the truth be told, New England rum." Though the prim Quaker poet never equaled Dinsmore in earthiness, his tolerant admiration of the rum-drinking New Hampshire farmer-poet reveals his warm humanity.

The young poet's sixty-year-old father was unimpressed by his son's rhyming, but other members of the family were proud of him, and in 1826 his sister sent one of his juvenile poems, "The Exile's Departure," to the editor of a near-by paper, the Newburyport *Free Press*. The editor happened to be William Lloyd Garrison, who a few years later became widely known as the leader of the most radical faction of the Abolitionists. He printed the poem on June 8 and declared editorially of the unknown author that this "poetry bears the stamp of true poetic genius, which if carefully cultivated, will rank him among the bards of the country." After learning the identity of the youthful bard, Garrison visited the Whittier home and finally persuaded the father to permit his son to attend the newly-founded Haverhill Academy. Whittier worked his way through a six-months term in 1827, taught school during the following winter, and in the spring of 1828 returned to the Academy for another term. Thus ended the poet's formal education—a few scattered months in a country school and about a year at the "academy."

In 1827-28 Whittier printed about a hundred poems and a number of prose articles in the Haverhill *Gazette*. At this time some of his poems appeared in the Boston *Statesman*, and many were reprinted in other newspapers. Thus he was beginning to be known while still a schoolboy. It is not surprising, however, that these productions were imitative and mediocre. He extravagantly admired Moore, Wil-

lis, Bryant, and especially the sentimental and didactic Mrs. Hemans. In his adolescent love affairs he also liked to play a Byronic rôle.

Despite the popularity of Whittier's poems among newspaper readers throughout the country, he could not yet earn even a meagre living with his poetry. Having first gained a hearing, and even a certain amount of fame, through newspapers, it was natural that he should turn to journalism for a livelihood. On January 1, 1829, he became editor of the *American Manufacturer* in Boston, at the salary of \$9.00 a week. The policies of this undistinguished journal were anti-Jackson, pro-Clay, and of course for protective tariff and the mercantile interests. In his editorials Whittier tried to appeal to the "young mechanics of New England." In August, however, he was called home by the illness of his father, who died the following June. During this time he had to take charge of the farm. For six months he edited the *Haverhill Gazette*, and then became editor of the *New England Review* in Hartford, Connecticut, a magazine which had become well known as a pro-Clay organ. But in less than a year Whittier had to return home again to settle his father's affairs, and after unsuccessfully attempting to edit the magazine by correspondence, he became so seriously ill that he was forced to resign.

From Hartford in 1831 Whittier published his first book, *Legends of New-England*, containing seven prose sketches, dealing mainly with Indian and local subjects. These strike the modern reader as an anemic imitation of Hawthorne, typical of magazine stories and articles of the 1830-40's. Like most American writers before the Civil War, he was trying to prove that his native country was not deficient in the elements of poetry and romance—meanwhile unconsciously transplanting English and European romanticism.

This romanticism was also partly responsible for Whittier's rebellious, Byronic mood of the early 1830's, though disappointment in love (a judge's daughter had repulsed him in Hartford) and poor health were also responsible. "I cannot look upon the world with kindness," he wrote to a friend, "however much I desire to do so. It has neglected, it has wronged me, and its idle praise is little less repulsive to me than its loud and open rebukes." In this frame of mind, in contrast to his later serenity, Whittier was greedy for fame and in 1832 began to dream of making a name for himself in politics. This was no idle fancy, either, for his friends seriously considered him for Congress; but he was then not quite

twenty-five, the legal age for holding the office, and before his next birthday arrived conditions were unfavorable for his candidacy.

Had Whittier not soon found a cause in which he could forget his personal ambitions, he might have become—as he seemed so near doing in 1832—an opportunistic politician; but, instead, in 1833 he became an active participant in the then unpopular Abolitionist movement. The New England Anti-Slavery Society had been founded by Garrison the previous year, and had started the *Liberator* as the official organ, but Whittier had not joined at once. There were at this time many reform movements in America, and the leaders were often—though not always—crude, semi-educated, impractical, and fanatical. Churches, colleges, and the refined elements of society found these leaders annoying and increasingly alarming. It took courage to join the ranks of the Abolitionists when Whittier did, and for a man with frail health he showed remarkable fortitude on several occasions when he and his antislavery friends were threatened by angry mobs. But while Garrison often endangered the success of the great cause of Abolition by his championship of women's rights and other reforms, Whittier remained the practical politician, working through local committees and organizations. In this manner he made his influence felt in the halls of Congress. Meanwhile he himself was twice elected to the Massachusetts Legislature, but he soon overtaxed his strength and was forced once more into retirement.

In 1836 Whittier sold the old farm and bought a modest house in Amesbury, a near-by village where his family had attended the Quaker church. To this quiet village he moved his mother and sister, and there, except for short intervals, he lived and worked during most of his remaining life. In 1837 he helped edit the *Emancipator* and the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* in New York. In 1838 he edited the *Pennsylvania Freeman* in Philadelphia, and was present though unharmed when a mob burned Pennsylvania Hall, a sumptuous building recently erected with funds raised by subscription.

In 1838 Whittier brought out an edition of his *Poems*, placing first antislavery poems, "The Yankee Girl," "The Slavery-Ships," and "The Hunters of Men." No other American abolitionist was as successful in wielding a poem like a pikestaff. But his moral and patriotic zeal were stronger than his aesthetic or critical judgment. In an editorial in the *Freeman* in 1838 he could write of the "Psalm of Life," which he had seen printed anonymously:

It is seldom that we find an article of poetry so full of excellent philosophy and common sense. These nine simple verses are worth more than all the dreams of Shelley, and Keats, and Wordsworth. They are alive and vigorous with the spirit of the day in which we live—the moral steam engine of an age of action.

During the 1840's Whittier found it difficult to support his mother, sister, and himself at Amesbury, but between frequent attacks of dyspepsia and migraine headaches he managed to give a few abolitionist lectures, write frequent letters to friends and politicians in the interest of the cause, and sell poems to various newspapers and magazines. The inflexible Garrison faction grew increasingly hostile toward Whittier because of his practical reasonableness, but he continued to write for other antislavery publications. In 1847 he became corresponding secretary of the *National Era*, an abolition magazine in Washington.

These experiences broadened the poet until in 1848 he could advise his friend Charles Sumner to abandon party lines in order to work for "the great party of Christian Democracy and Progress. . . Why try to hold on to these old parties, even in name? . . . Let your emancipated friends now rise to the sublime altitude of men who labor for the race, for humanity." But party leaders could not share these liberal sentiments. After the "Free Soil" elements were purged from the Democratic Party, it became proslavery. About this time the Whigs lost out, and in 1856 the new Republican Party had a weak candidate. Consequently, Whittier became less hopeful of reforms through the regular parties. But in 1848 he was still known mainly for his propaganda writings, as Lowell indicated in "The Fable for Critics":

Our Quaker leads off metaphorical fights
For reform and whatever they call rights,
Both singing and striking in front of the war,
And hitting his foes with the mallet of Thor; . . .

Abolition and reform are prominent in all the collections of verse which Whittier published between 1843 and 1855: *Lays of My Home* (1843), *Voices of Freedom* (1846), *Poems* (1849), *Songs of Labor* (1850), *The Chapel of the Hermits* (1853), and *The Panorama* (1856).

Whittier never actually lost faith in reform, and in 1859-60 he took great interest in Garibaldi's struggle for freedom in Italy, but in the 1850's he began to turn his attention more to reminiscence and personal experience, as in "To My Old Schoolmates" (1851) and "The Barefoot Boy" (1855). One of his

earliest major poetic themes had been New England legend and history—such as the juvenile *Megone* (1836) on the early border strife with the Indians and the more successful prose in *The Supernaturalism of New England* (1843). During this decade he returned to the local scene for some of his most interesting poems, such as "The Garrison of Cape Ann" and "Skipper Ireson's Ride" in 1847, and "The Prophecy of Samuel Sewall" and "The Double-Headed Snake of Newbury" in 1859.

After the founding of the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1857 Whittier's financial worries decreased, for he was invited to become a regular contributor, and he had already attained sufficient prestige to command a good price for his poems. One of the first which he contributed to *The Atlantic Monthly* was "Skipper Ireson's Ride," though without the dialect, which editor James Russell Lowell, who fancied himself an expert on dialect, persuaded the country-bred poet to add. Association and correspondence with the *Atlantic Monthly* brought Whittier into more intimate contact with the leading New England writers of his generation. He and Dr. Holmes, for example, developed a mutual admiration for each other's writing. Whittier enthusiastically predicted in 1858 that "The Chambered Nautilus" was "booked for immortality."

As the fateful Civil War drew nearer, Whittier, who had fought relentlessly for two decades against slavery, became increasingly pacifistic. Perhaps his Quaker background was beginning to tell, at the very time when he was turning from outward events to his inner experiences and memories for poetic inspiration. On December 2, 1859, he wrote to a friend regarding John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry: "What a sad tragedy to-day in Virginia! I feel deep sympathy for John Brown, but deplore from my heart his rash and insane attempt. It injures the cause he sought to serve." On another occasion he declared "It is worse than folly to talk of fighting Slavery, when we have not yet agreed to vote against it. Our business is with poll-boxes, not cartridge boxes, with ballots, not bullets." When war finally came, he was passively devout, as in the prayer "Thy Will Be Done" and the Lutheran hymn "E feste Burg ist unser Gott." As George Rice Carpenter says, "The verses wrung from him in these bitter years were not the warrior's shout, but the wail of the stricken woman, the prayer of faith and resignation that breathed submission to the will of Heaven and trust in the outcome of the right."

In the 1860's the retiring old bachelor in the tiny village of Amesbury returned time and again in his poems to the moral of "Maud Muller," i.e., the s

cial barrier hindering marriage between the rich and poor. In "Amy Wentworth," "The Maids of Attitash," and "Among the Hills" we can see that the poet did not remain a bachelor by inclination, and his imagination dwells as lovingly on "what might have been" as if there had been a Beatrice in his life. How much family affection meant to him we can also see in the classic "Snow-Bound" (1866), published two years after the death of his dear sister, Elizabeth.

In his old age Whittier's income more than supplied his simple needs. "Snow-Bound" alone brought him \$10,000 in royalties. He was so well known and so popular that famous men visited him on his birthday, and the day was observed by school children. Public and academic honors were also heaped upon him. In 1858 he was elected by the Legislature to membership on the Board of Overseers of Harvard College. In 1860 Harvard conferred an honorary Master of Arts degree upon him, and six years later he was made an honorary Doctor of Laws. In 1869 he became a member of the Board of Trustees of Brown University.

After his sister's death in 1864, the poet's niece,

Elizabeth Whittier, kept house for him in Amesbury until in 1876 she married Samuel T. Pickard, who later wrote the authorized biography of Whittier. From this time until his death in 1892, he divided his time between the Pickards and some cousins at Danvers. For a generation after this event, his reputation remained high, though it slowly declined as the fame of Lowell and Holmes also ebbed away. But he did not really belong to their genteel world, and perhaps his popularity with the readers of the early *Atlantic Monthly* was an indication of his retreat from the life of the common people which he knew better than the affable Dr. Holmes or the distinguished editor of the *Atlantic*. When he relaxed the fight for human rights, he sought refuge, like Mark Twain, in boyhood memories and fond dreams of the past. Today most of his fighting songs for the lowly and down-trodden have lost their original significance, and only the personal lyrics of the fifties and sixties have retained their somewhat diminished charm. Yet enough is left for the sympathetic student to see that John Greenleaf Whittier had native poetic genius and deserved in his own day to stand with the great.

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*Memories*¹

A beautiful and happy girl,
 With step as light as summer air,
 Eyes glad with smiles, and brow of pearl,
 Shadowed by many a careless curl
 Of unconfined and flowing hair,
 A seeming child in everything,
 Save thoughtful brow and ripening charms,
 As Nature wears the smile of Spring
 When sinking into Summer's arms

A mind rejoicing in the light
 Which melted through its graceful bower,
 Leaf after leaf, dew-moist and bright,
 And stainless in its holy white,
 Unfolding like a morning flower
 A heart, which, like a fine-toned lute,
 With every breath of feeling woke,
 And, even when the tongue was mute,
 From eye and lip in music spoke

How thrills once more the lengthening chain
 Of memory, at the thought of thee!
 Old hopes which long in dust have lain,
 Old dreams, come thronging back again,
 And boyhood lives again in me,
 I feel its glow upon my cheek,
 Its fulness of the heart is mine,
 As when I leaned to hear thee speak,
 Or raised my doubtful eye to thine.

I hear again thy low replies,
 I feel thy arm within my own,
 And timidly again arise
 The fringed lids of hazel eyes,
 With soft brown tresses overblown
 Ah! memories of sweet summer eves,
 Of moonlit wave and willowy way,
 Of stars and flowers, and dewy leaves,
 And smiles and tones more dear than they!

Ere this, thy quiet eye hath smiled
 My picture of thy youth to see,
 When, half a woman, half a child,
 Thy very artlessness beguiled,

And folly's self seemed wise in thee,
 I too can smile, when o'er that hour
 The lights of memory backward stream,
 Yet feel the while that manhood's power
 Is vainer than my boyhood's dream

Years have passed on, and left their trace,
 Of graver care and deeper thought,
 And unto me the calm, cold face
 Of manhood, and to thee the grace
 Of woman's pensive beauty brought
 More wide, perchance, for blame than praise,
 The school-boy's humble name has flown,
 Thine, in the green and quiet ways
 Of unobtrusive goodness known.

And wider yet in thought and deed
 Diverge our pathways, one in youth,
 Thine the Genevan's sternest creed,
 While answers to my spirit's need
 The Derby dalesman's simple truth.
 For thee, the priestly rite and prayer,
 And holy day, and solemn psalm,
 For me, the silent reverence where
 My brethren gather, slow and calm.

Yet hath thy spirit left on me
 An impress Time has worn not out,
 And something of myself in thee,
 A shadow from the past, I see,
 Lingering, even yet, thy way about;
 Not wholly can the heart unlearn
 That lesson of its better hours,
 Not yet has Time's dull footstep worn
 To common dust that path of flowers.

Thus, while at times before our eyes
 The shadows melt, and fall apart,
 And, smiling through them, round us lies
 The warm light of our morning skies,—
 The Indian Summer of the heart!
 In secret sympathies of mind,
 In founts of feeling which retain
 Their pure, fresh flow, we yet may find
 Our early dreams not wholly vain!

1841

1843, 1850

¹ Though written in 1841, this poem was based on an experience in Whittier's younger days. Samuel T. Pickard, the official biographer, reports of Whittier "To a friend who told him that *Memories* was her favorite poem, he said, 'I love it

too; but I hardly knew whether to publish it, it was so personal and near my heart'" Albert Mordell, in *Quaker Militant*, identifies the girl as Mary Emerson Smith, a cousin

*Lucy Hooper*²

They tell me, Lucy, thou art dead,
 That all of thee we loved and cherished
 Has with thy summer roses perished;
 And left, as its young beauty fled,
 An ashen memory in its stead,
 The twilight of a parted day
 Whose fading light is cold and vain,
 The heart's faint echo of a strain
 Of low, sweet music passed away.
 That true and loving heart, that gift
 Of a mind, earnest, clear, profound,
 Bestowing, with a glad unthrift,
 Its sunny light on all around,
 Affinities which only could
 Cleave to the pure, the true, and good;
 And sympathies which found no rest,
 Save with the loveliest and best.
 Of them—of thee—remains there naught
 But sorrow in the mourner's breast?
 A shadow in the land of thought?
 No! Even my weak and trembling faith
 Can lift for thee the veil which doubt
 And human fear have drawn about
 The all-awaiting scene of death.

Even as thou wast I see thee still;
 And, save the absence of all ill
 And pain and weariness, which here
 Summoned the sigh or wrung the tear,
 The same as when, two summers back,
 Beside our childhood's Merrimac,
 I saw thy dark eye wander o'er
 Stream, sunny upland, rocky shore,
 And heard thy low, soft voice alone
 Midst lapse of waters, and the tone
 Of pine-leaves by the west-wind blown,
 There's not a charm of soul or brow,
 Of all we knew and loved in thee,
 But lives in holier beauty now,
 Baptized in immortality!
 Not mine the sad and freezing dream
 Of souls that, with their earthly mould,
 Cast off the loves and joys of old,

Unbodied, like a pale moonbeam,
 As pure, as passionless, and cold;
 Nor mine the hope of Indra's son,
 Of slumbering in oblivion's rest,
 Life's myriads blending into one,
 In blank annihilation blest;
 Dust-atoms of the infinite,
 Sparks scattered from the central light,
 And winning back through mortal pain
 Their old unconsciousness again.
 No! I have friends in Spirit Land,
 Not shadows in a shadowy band,
 Not others, but themselves are they.
 And still I think of them the same
 As when the Master's summons came;
 Their change,—the holy morn-light breaking
 Upon the dream-worn sleeper, waking,—
 A change from twilight into day.

They've laid thee midst the household graves,
 Where father, brother, sister lie;
 Below thee sweep the dark blue waves,
 Above thee bends the summer sky.
 Thy own loved church in sadness read
 Her solemn ritual o'er thy head,
 And blessed and hallowed with her prayer
 The turf laid lightly o'er thee there.
 That church, whose rites and liturgy,
 Sublime and old, were truth to thee,
 Undoubted to thy bosom taken,
 As symbols of a faith unshaken.
 Even I, of simpler views, could feel
 The beauty of thy trust and zeal;
 And, owning not thy creed, could see
 How deep a truth it seemed to thee,
 And how thy fervent heart had thrown
 O'er all, a coloring of its own,
 And kindled up, intense and warm,
 A life in every rite and form,
 As, when on Chebar's banks of old,
 The Hebrew's gorgeous vision rolled,
 A spirit filled the vast machine,
 A life "within the wheels" was seen.

Farewell! A little time, and we
 Who knew thee well, and loved thee here,
 One after one shall follow thee
 As pilgrims through the gate of fear,
 Which opens on eternity,
 Yet shall we cherish not the less

² Whittier met Lucy Hooper in 1837. She was a young poetess then living in Brooklyn, N. Y., though she was born in Whittier's region. He was favorably impressed by her work and printed several of her poems in 1838 in the *Pennsylvania Freeman*. She died in 1841, at the age of twenty-four.

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All that is left our hearts meanwhile,
 The memory of thy loveliness
 Shall round our weary pathway smile,
 Like moonlight when the sun has set,
 A sweet and tender radiance yet
 Thoughts of thy clear-eyed sense of duty,
 Thy generous scorn of all things wrong,
 The truth, the strength, the graceful beauty
 Which blended in thy song
 All lovely things, by thee beloved,
 Shall whisper to our hearts of thee,
 These green hills, where thy childhood roved,
 Yon river winding to the sea,
 The sunset light of autumn eves
 Reflecting on the deep, still floods,
 Cloud, crimson sky, and trembling leaves
 Of rainbow-tinted woods,
 These, in our view, shall henceforth take
 A tenderer meaning for thy sake,
 And all thou lovedst of earth and sky
 Seem sacred to thy memory.

1841

*Massachusetts to Virginia*³

The blast from Freedom's Northern hills, upon
 its Southern way,
 Bears greeting to Virginia from Massachusetts
 Bay:
 No word of haughty challenging, nor battle
 bugle's peal,
 Nor steady tread of marching files, nor clang of
 horseman's steel
 No trains of deep-mouthed cannon along our
 highways go,
 Around our silent arsenals untrodden lies the
 snow,
 And to the land-breeze of our ports, upon their
 errands far,
 A thousand sails of commerce swell, but none
 are spread for war.
 We hear thy threats, Virginia! thy stormy words
 and high

³ The occasion of this poem was the arrest in Boston of a fugitive slave, George Latimer, at the request of his Virginia master, James B. Grey, of Norfolk. The case was widely publicized, and caused great excitement in both the North and South. Fifty thousand Massachusetts citizens petitioned Congress for laws or Constitutional amendments to prevent similar occurrences. Latimer's freedom was finally bought for \$400.

Swell harshly on the Southern winds which melt
 along our sky,
 Yet, not one brown, hard hand foregoes its
 honest labor here,
 No hewer of our mountain oaks suspends his
 axe in fear
 Wild are the waves which lash the reefs along
 St. George's bank,
 Cold on the shores of Labrador the fog lies
 white and dank,
 Through storm, and wave, and blinding mist,
 stout are the hearts which man
 The fishing-smacks of Marblehead, the sca-
 boats of Cape Ann.
 The cold north light and wintry sun glare on
 their icy forms,
 Bent grimly o'er their straining lines or wrestling
 with the storms,
 Free as the winds they drive before, rough as the
 waves they foam,
 They laugh to scorn the slave's threat against
 their rocky home.

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What means the Old Dominion? Hath she forgot
 the day
 When o'er her conquered valleys swept the
 Briton's steel array?
 How side by side, with sons of hers, the
 Massachusetts men
 Encountered Tarleton's charge of fire, and stout
 Cornwallis, then?
 Forgets she how the Bay State, in answer to the
 call
 Of her old House of Burgesses, spoke out from
 Faneuil Hall?⁴
 When, echoing back her Henry's cry, came
 pulsing on each breath
 Of Northern winds the thrilling sounds of
 "Liberty or Death!"⁵
 What asks the Old Dominion? If now her sons
 have proved
 False to their fathers' memory, false to the faith
 they loved,

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⁴ Many patriotic rallies were held in Faneuil Hall, Boston. Massachusetts followed the example of the Virginia Legislature in adopting resolutions of independence in 1769 and 1774.

⁵ From Patrick Henry's famous speech (text of which survives only in a report written down from memory), March, 1775

If she can scoff at Freedom, and its great charter
spurn,
Must we of Massachusetts from truth and duty
turn?

We hunt your bondmen, flying from Slavery's
hateful hell;
Our voices, at your bidding, take up the blood-
hound's yell;
We gather, at your summons, above our fathers'
graves,
From Freedom's holy altar-horns ⁶ to tear your
wretched slaves!

Thank God! not yet so vilely can Massachusetts
bow;
The spirit of her early time is with her even now;
Dream not because her Pilgrim blood moves slow
and calm and cool,
She thus can stoop her chainless neck, a sister's
slave and tool!

All that a sister State should do, all that a free
State may,
Heart, hand, and purse we proffer, as in our
early day;
But that one dark loathsome burden ye must
stagger with alone,
And reap the bitter harvest which ye yourselves
have sown!

Hold, while ye may, your struggling slaves, and
burden God's free air
With woman's shriek beneath the lash, and
manhood's wild despair;⁷
Cling closer to the "cleaving curse" that writes
upon your plains
The blasting of Almighty wrath against a land
of chains.

Still shame your gallant ancestry, the cavaliers
of old,
By watching round the shambles where human
flesh is sold;
Gloat o'er the new-born child, and count his
market value, when
The maddened mother's cry of woe shall pierce
the slaver's den!

Lower than plummet soundeth, sink the Virginia
name;
Plant, if ye will, your fathers' graves with rankest
weeds of shame;
Be, if ye will, the scandal of God's fair universe;
We wash our hands forever of your sin and
shame and curse.

A voice from lips whereon the coal from Free-
dom's shrine hath been,
Thrilled, as but yesterday, the hearts of Berk-
shire's ⁸ mountain men:
The echoes of that solemn voice are sadly
lingering still
In all our sunny valleys, on every wind-swept hill. 60

And when the prowling man-thief came hunting
for his prey
Beneath the very shadow of Bunker's shaft of
gray,
40 How, through the free lips of the son, the father's
warning spoke;
How, from its bonds of trade and sect, the
Pilgrim city broke!

A hundred thousand right arms were lifted up
on high,
A hundred thousand voices sent back their loud
reply;
Through the thronged towns of Essex the startling
summons rang,
And up from bench and loom and wheel her
young mechanics sprang!

The voice of free, broad Middlesex, of thousands
as of one,
The shaft of Bunker calling to that of Lexington; 70
From Norfolk's ancient villages, from Plymouth's
rocky bound
To where Nantucket feels the arms of ocean
close her round;

From rich and rural Worcester, where through
the calm repose
Of cultured vales and fringing woods the gentle
Nashua flows,
To where Wachuset's wintry blasts the moun-
tain larches stir,

⁶ I Kings i:50.

⁷ Genesis iv:11-12.

⁸ Here and in the next five stanzas Whittier names eleven
Massachusetts counties.

Swelled up to Heaven the thrilling cry of "God
save Latimer!"

And sandy Barnstable rose up, wet with the salt
sea spray,
And Bristol sent her answering shout down
Narragansett Bay!
Along the broad Connecticut old Hampden felt
the thrill,
And the cheer of Hampshire's woodmen swept
down from Holyoke Hill

The voice of Massachusetts! Of her free sons
and daughters,
Deep calling unto deep aloud, the sound of
many waters!
Against the burden of that voice what tyrant
power shall stand?
No fetters in the Bay State! No slave upon her
land!

Look to it well, Virginians! In calmness we have
borne,
In answer to our faith and trust, your insult and
your scorn,
You've spurned our kindest counsels, you've
hunted for our lives,
And shaken round our hearths and homes your
manacles and gyves!

We wage no war, we lift no arm, we fling no
torch within
The fire-damps of the quaking mine beneath your
soil of sin,
We leave ye with your bondmen, to wrestle,
while ye can,
With the strong upward tendencies and godlike
soul of man!

But for us and for our children, the vow which
we have given
For freedom and humanity is registered in heaven;
No slave-hunt in our borders,—no pirate on our
strand!
No fetters in the Bay State,—no slave upon our
land!

1843

⁹ Introduction for a group of six poems on shoemakers, fishermen, lumbermen, shipbuilders, cattledrovers, and cornhuskers. The poet idealizes the persons and occupations and is not concerned about the social or economic problems of the laborers, though he was always a champion of justice.

FROM

Songs of Labor
*Dedication*⁹

I would the gift I offer here
Might grace from thy favor take,
And, seen through Friendship's atmospheric,
On softened lines and coloring, wear
The unaccustomed light of beauty, for thy sake

Few leaves of Fancy's spring remain
But what I have I give to thee,
The o'er-sunned bloom of summer's plain,
And paler flowers, the latter rain
Calls from the westering slope of life's autumnal
lea.

10

Above the fallen groves of green,
Where youth's enchanted forest stood,
Dry root and mossed trunk between,
A sober after-growth is seen,
As springs the pine where falls the gay-leaved
maple wood!

Yet birds will sing, and breezes play
Their leaf-harps in the sombre tree,
And through the bleak and wintry day
It keeps its steady green away,—
So, even my after-thoughts may have a charm
for thee

20

Art's perfect forms no moral need,
And beauty is its own excuse,
But for the dull and flowerless weed
Some healing virtue still must plead,
And the rough ore must find its honors in its use.

So haply these, my simple lays
Of homely toil, may serve to show
The orchard bloom and tasselled maize
That skit and gladden duty's ways,
The unsung beauty hid life's common things
below

30

Haply from them the toiler, bent
Above his forge or plough, may gain
A manlier spirit of content,
And feel that life is wisest spent
Where the strong working hand makes strong the
working brain.

The doom which to the guilty pair
 Without the walls of Eden came,
 Transforming sinless ease to care
 And rugged toil, no more shall bear
 The burden of old crime, or mark of primal
 shame.

A blessing now, a curse no more;
 Since He, whose name we breathe with awe,
 The coarse mechanic vesture wore,
 A poor man toiling with the poor,
 In labor, as in prayer, fulfilling the same law.

The Shoemakers ¹⁰

Ho! workers of the old time styled
 The Gentle Craft of Leather!
 Young brothers of the ancient guild,
 Stand forth once more together!
 Call out again your long array,
 In the olden merry manner!
 Once more, on gay St. Crispin's day,¹¹
 Fling out your blazoned banner!

Rap, rap! upon the well-worn stone
 How falls the polished hammer!
 Rap, rap! the measured sound has grown
 A quick and merry clamor.
 Now shape the sole! now deftly curl
 The glossy vamp around it,
 And bless the while the bright-eyed girl
 Whose gentle fingers bound it!

For you, along the Spanish main
 A hundred keels are ploughing;
 For you, the Indian on the plain ¹²
 His lasso-coil is throwing;
 For you, deep glens with hemlock dark
 The woodman's fire is lighting;
 For you, upon the oak's gray bark,
 The woodman's axe is smiting.

For you, from Carolina's pine
 The rosin-gum is stealing;
 For you, the dark-eyed Florentine
 Her silken skein is reeling;

¹⁰ Whittier felt a personal sympathy with the shoemakers because he had learned the craft himself. In this poem he romanticizes the medieval master craftsman. At the time of writing, the individual shoemaker was being displaced by the factory.

¹¹ October 25; Crispin, a shoemaker, became a martyr on this day in the third century.

¹² Argentinian cowboy—Indian of the pampas. Hides were imported from South America.

For you, the dizzy goatherd roams
 His rugged Alpine ledges;
 For you, round all her shepherd homes,
 Bloom England's thorny hedges.

The foremost still, by day or night,
 On moated mound or heather,
 Where'er the need of trampled right
 Brought toiling men together;
 Where the free burghers from the wall
 Defied the mail-clad master,
 Than yours, at Freedom's trumpet-call,
 No craftsmen rallied faster.

Let foplings sneer, let fools deride,
 Ye heed no idle scorner;
 Free hands and hearts are still your pride,
 And duty done your honor.
 Ye dare to trust, for honest fame,
 The jury Time empanels,
 And leave to truth each noble name
 Which glorifies your annals.

Thy songs, Hans Sachs,¹³ are living yet,
 In strong and hearty German;
 And Bloomfield's ¹⁴ lay, and Gifford's wit,
 And patriot fame of Sherman;
 Still from his book, a mystic seer,
 The soul of Behmen ¹⁵ teaches,
 And England's priestcraft shakes to hear
 Of Fox's leathern breeches.¹⁶

The foot is yours; where'er it falls,
 It treads your well-wrought leather,
 On earthen floor, in marble halls,
 On carpet, or on heather.

Still there the sweetest charm is found
 Of matron grace or vestal's,
 As Hebe's ¹⁷ foot bore nectar round
 Among the old celestials!

Rap, rap!—your stout and bluff brogan,
 With footsteps slow and weary,
 May wander where the sky's blue span
 Shuts down upon the prairie.

¹³ Hans Sachs (1494–1576), itinerant shoemaker and German Meistersinger, who composed over 6,000 works.

¹⁴ Robert Bloomfield (1766–1823), English shoemaker and poet.

¹⁵ Jakob Böhme (1575–1624)—various spellings. A German mystic.

¹⁶ George Fox (1624–91), founder of Society of Friends (nicknamed "Quakers").

¹⁷ In Greek mythology, cup bearer to the gods.

On Beauty's foot your slippers glance,
 By Saratoga's ¹⁸ fountains,
 Or twinkle down the summer dance
 Beneath the Crystal Mountains!

The red brick to the mason's hand,
 The brown earth to the tiller's,
 The shoe in yours shall wealth command,
 Like fairy Cinderella's!
 As they who shunned the household maid
 Beheld the crown upon her,
 So all shall see your toil repaid
 With hearth and home and honor

Then let the toast be freely quaffed,
 In water cool and brimming,—
 "All honor to the good old Craft,
 Its merry men and women!"
 Call out again your long array,
 In the old time's pleasant manner
 Once more, on gay St. Crispin's day,
 Fling out his blazoned banner!

1845

1850

The Huskers ¹⁹

It was late in mild October, and the long
 autumnal rain
 Had left the summer harvest-fields all green with
 grass again,
 The first sharp frosts had fallen, leaving all the
 woodlands gay
 With the hues of summer's rainbow, or the
 meadow-flowers of May

Through a thin, dry mist, that morning, the sun
 rose broad and red,
 At first a rayless disk of fire, he brightened as he
 sped,

Yet even his noontide glory fell chastened and
 subdued,

On the cornfields and the orchards and softly
 pictured wood

And all that quiet afternoon, slow sloping to the
 night,

He wove with golden shuttle the haze with
 yellow light,

Slanting through the painted beeches, he glorified
 the hill,

¹⁸ Saratoga Springs, famous resort

¹⁹ A charming picture of rural life in Whittier's youth

70

And, beneath it, pond and meadow lay brighter,
 greener still

And shouting boys in woodland haunts caught
 glimpses of that sky,

Flecked by the many-tinted leaves, and laughed,
 they knew not why,

And school-gulls, gay with aster-flowers, beside
 the meadow brooks,

Mingled the glow of autumn with the sunshine
 of sweet looks

80

From spire and bairn looked westerly the patient
 weathercocks,

But even the birches on the hill stood motionless
 as rocks

No sound was in the woodlands, save the squirrel's
 dropping shell,

And the yellow leaves among the boughs, low
 rustling as they fell

20

The summer grains were harvested, the stubble-
 fields lay dry,

Where June winds rolled, in light and shade, the
 pale green waves of rye,

But still, on gentle hill-slopes, in valleys fringed
 with wood,

Ungathered, bleaching in the sun, the heavy corn
 crop stood.

Bent low, by autumn's wind and rain, through
 husks that, dry and sere,

Unfolded from their ripened charge, shone out
 the yellow ear,

Beneath, the turnip lay concealed, in many a
 verdant fold,

And glistened in the slanting light the pumpkin's
 sphere of gold

There wrought the busy harvesters, and many a
 creaking wain

Bore slowly to the long barn-floor its load of husk
 and grain,

30

Till broad and red, as when he rose, the sun sank
 down, at last,

And like a merry guest's farewell, the day in
 brightness passed

And lo! as through the western pines, on meadow,
 stream, and pond,

Flamed the red radiance of a sky, set all afire
 beyond,

Slowly o'er the eastern sea-bluffs a milder glory
shone,
And the sunset and the moonrise were mingled
into one!

As thus into the quiet night the twilight lapsed
away,
And deeper in the brightening moon the tranquil
shadows lay;
From many a brown old farm-house, and hamlet
without name,
Their milking and their home-tasks done, the
merry huskers came.

40

Swung o'er the heaped-up harvest, from pitch-
forks in the mow,
Shone dimly down the lanterns on the pleasant
scene below;
The growing pile of husks behind, the golden
ears before,
And laughing eyes and busy hands and brown
cheeks glimmering o'er.

Half hidden, in a quiet nook, serene of look and
heart,
Talking their old times over, the old men sat
apart;
While up and down the unhusked pile, or
nestling in its shade.
At hide-and-seek, with laugh and shout, the
happy children played.

Urged by the good host's daughter, a maiden
young and fair,
Lifting to light her sweet blue eyes and pride of
soft brown hair,
The master of the village school, sleek of hair
and smooth of tongue,
To the quaint tune of some old psalm, a husking-
ballad sung.

THE CORN SONG

Heap high the farmer's wintry hoard!
Heap high the golden corn!
No richer gift has Autumn poured
From out her lavish horn!

Let other lands, exulting, glean
The apple from the pine,
The orange from its glossy green,
The cluster from the vine;

60

We better love the hardy gift
Our rugged vales bestow,
To cheer us when the storm shall drift
Our harvest-fields with snow.

Through vales of grass and meads of flowers
Our ploughs their furrows made,
While on the hills the sun and showers
Of changeful April played.

We dropped the seed o'er hill and plain
Beneath the sun of May,
And frightened from our sprouting grain
The robber crows away.

70

All through the long, bright days of June
Its leaves grew green and fair,
And waved in hot midsummer's noon
Its soft and yellow hair.

And now, with autumn's moonlit eves,
Its harvest-time has come,
We pluck away the frosted leaves,
And bear the treasure home.

80

There, when the snows about us drift,
And winter winds are cold,
Fair hands the broken grain shall sift,
And knead its meal of gold.

Let vapid idlers loll in silk
Around their costly board;
Give us the bowl of samp and milk,
By homespun beauty poured!

Where'er the wide old kitchen hearth
Sends up its smoky curls,
Who will not thank the kindly earth,
And bless our farmer girls!

90

Then shame on all the proud and vain,
Whose folly laughs to scorn
The blessing of our hardy grain,
Our wealth of golden corn!

Let earth withhold her goodly root,
Let mildew blight the rye,
Give to the worm the orchard's fruit,
The wheat-field to the fly:

100

But let the good old crop adorn
The hills our fathers trod;
Still let us, for his golden corn,
Send up our thanks to God!

1847

1850

*Proem*²⁰

I love the old melodious lays
Which softly melt the ages through,
The songs of Spenser's golden days,
Arcadian Sidney's silvery phrase,
Sprinkling our noon of time with freshest morn-
ing dew

Yet, vainly in my quiet hours
To breathe their marvellous notes I try,
I feel them, as the leaves and flowers
In silence feel the dewy showers,
And drink with glad, still lips the blessing of
the sky

The rigor of a frozen clime,
The harshness of an untaught ear,
The jarring words of one whose rhyme
Beat often Labor's hurried time,
Or Duty's rugged march through storm and
strife, are here.

Of mystic beauty, dreamy grace,
No rounded art the lack supplies,
Unskilled the subtle lines to trace,
Or softer shades of Nature's face,
I view her common forms with unanointed eyes

Nor mine the seer-like power to show
The secrets of the heart and mind,
To drop the plummet-line below
Our common world of joy and woe,
A more intense despair or brighter hope to find

Yet here at least an earnest sense
Of human right and weal is shown,
A hate of tyranny intense,
And hearty in its vehemence,
As if my brother's pain and sorrow were my own

O Freedom! if to me belong
Nor mighty Milton's gift divine,
Nor Marvell's wit and graceful song,
Still with a love as deep and strong
As theirs, I lay, like them, my best gifts on thy
shrine!

1847

1849

²⁰ Written to serve as an introduction to Whittier's first volume of collected poems, 1849—valuable for its recording of the poet's literary ambitions and his own recognition of his limitation. See the "Dedication" to *Songs of Labor* for another expression of Whittier's poetic intentions

*The Crisis*²¹

Across the Stony Mountains, o'er the desert's
drouth and sand,
The circles of our empire touch the western
ocean's strand,
From slumberous Timpanogos, to Gila, wild and
free,
Flowing down from Nuevo-Leon to California's
sea,
And from the mountains of the east, to Santa
Rosa's shore,
The eagles of Mexitli shall beat the air no more

10 O Vale of Rio Bravo! Let thy simple children
weep;
Close watch about their holy fire let maids of
Pecos keep,
Let Taos send her cry across Sierra Madre's pines,
And Santa Barbara toll her bells amidst her corn
and vines,
For lo! the pale land-seekers come, with eager
eyes of gain,
Wide scattering, like the bison herds on broad
Salada's plain

Let Sacramento's herdsmen heed what sound the
winds bring down
Of footsteps on the cringing snow, from cold
Nevada's crown!
Full hot and fast the Saxon rides, with rein of
travel slack,
And, bending o'er his saddle, leaves the sunrise
at his back,
By many a lonely river, and gorge of fir and pine,
On many a wintry hill-top, his nightly camp-fires
shine

O countrymen and brothers! that land of lake
and plain,
Of salt wastes alternating with valleys fat with
grain,
Of mountains white with winter, looking down-
ward, cold, serene,
On their feet with spring-vines tangled and
lapped in softest green,
Swift through whose black volcanic gates, o'er
many a sunny vale,

²¹ Whittier's protest against the American terms of the treaty with Mexico

Wind-like the Arapahoe sweeps the bison's dusty trail!

Great spaces yet untravelled, great lakes whose mystic shores

The Saxon rifle never heard, nor dip of Saxon oars;

Great herds that wander all unwatched, wild steeds that none have tamed,

Strange fish in unknown streams, and birds the Saxon never named;

Deep mines, dark mountain crucibles, where Nature's chemic powers

Work out the Great Designer's will; all these ye say are ours!

30

Forever ours! for good or ill, on us the burden lies:

God's balance, watched by angels, is hung across the skies.

Shall Justice, Truth, and Freedom turn the poised and trembling scale?

Or shall the Evil triumph, and robber Wrong prevail?

Shall the broad land o'er which our flag in starry splendor waves,

Forego through us its freedom, and bear the tread of slaves?

The day is breaking in the East of which the prophets told,

And brightens up the sky of Time the Christian Age of Gold;

Old Might to Right is yielding, battle blade to clerkly pen,

Earth's monarchs are her peoples, and her serfs stand up as men;

40

The isles rejoice together, in a day are nations born,

And the slave walks free in Tunis, and by Stamboul's Golden Horn! ²²

Is this, O countrymen of mine! a day for us to sow

The soil of new-gained empire with slavery's seeds of woe?

To feed with our fresh life-blood the Old World's cast-off crime,

Dropped, like some monstrous early birth, from the tired lap of Time?

²² The part of Constantinople south of the Golden Horn.

To run anew the evil race the old lost nations ran,

And die like them of unbelief of God, and wrong of man?

Great Heaven! Is this our mission? End in this the prayers and tears,

The toil, the strife, the watchings of our younger, better years?

50

Still as the Old World rolls in light, shall ours in shadow turn,

A beamless Chaos, cursed of God, through outer darkness borne?

Where the far nations looked for light, a blackness in the air?

Where for words of hope they listened, the long wail of despair?

The Crisis presses on us; face to face with us it stands,

With solemn lips of question, like the Sphinx in Egypt's sands!

This day we fashion Destiny, our web of Fate we spin;

This day for all hereafter choose we holiness or sin;

Even now from starry Gerizim, or Ebal's cloudy crown,

We call the dews of blessing or the bolts of cursing down!

60

By all for which the martyrs bore their agony and shame;

By all the warning words of truth with which the prophets came;

By the Future which awaits us; by all the hopes which cast

Their faint and trembling beams across the blackness of the Past;

And by the blessed thought of Him who for Earth's freedom died,

O my people! O my brothers! let us choose the righteous side.

So shall the Northern pioneer go joyful on his way;

To wed Penobscot's ²³ waters to San Francisco's bay,

To make the rugged places smooth, and sow the vales with grain;

²³ River in Maine.

And bear, with Liberty and Law, the Bible in his
train: 70
The mighty West shall bless the East, and sea
shall answer sea,
And mountain unto mountain call, Praise God,
for we are free!

1848

Ichabod *

So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
Which once he wore!
The glory from his gray hairs gone
Forevermore!
Revile him not, the Tempter hath
A snare for all,
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,
Befit his fall!
Oh, dumb be passion's stormy rage,
When he who might
Have lighted up and led his age,
Falls back in night
Scorn! would the angels laugh, to mark
A bright soul driven,
Friend-goaded, down the endless dark,
From hope and heaven!
Let not the land once proud of him
Insult him now,

* This poem was the outcome of the surprise and grief and forecast of evil consequences which I felt on reading the seventh of March [1850] speech of Daniel Webster in support of the "compromise," and the Fugitive Slave Law. No partisan or personal enmity dictated it. On the contrary my admiration of the splendid personality and intellectual power of the great Senator was never stronger than when I laid down his speech, and, in one of the saddest moments of my life, penned my protest. I saw, as I wrote, with painful clearness its sure results,—the Slave Power arrogant and defiant, strengthened and encouraged to carry out its scheme for the extension of its baleful system, or the dissolution of the Union, the guarantees of personal liberty in the free States broken down, and the whole country made the hunting-ground of slave-catchers. In the horror of such a vision, so soon fearfully fulfilled, if one spoke at all, he could only speak in tones of stern and sorrowful rebuke.

But death softens all resentments, and the consciousness of a common inheritance of frailty and weakness modifies the severity of judgment. Years after, in *The Lost Occasion*, I gave utterance to an almost universal regret that the great statesman did not live to see the flag which he loved trampled under the feet of Slavery, and, in view of this desecration, make his last days glorious in defence of "Liberty and Union, one and inseparable."

Not brand with deeper shame his dim,
Dishonored brow 20

But let its humbled sons, instead,
From sea to lake,
A long lament, as for the dead,
In sadness make

Of all we loved and honored, naught
Save power remains,
A fallen angel's pride of thought,
Still strong in chains

All else is gone, from those great eyes
The soul has fled 30
When faith is lost, when honor dies,
The man is dead!

Then, pay the reverence of old days
To his dead fame,
Walk backward, with averted gaze,
And hide the shame!

1850

Maud Muller *

Maud Muller on a summer's day
Raked the meadow sweet with hay

Beneath her torn hat glowed the wealth
Of simple beauty and rustic health.

Singing, she wrought, and her merry glee
The mock-bird echoed from his tree

But when she glanced to the far-off town,
White from its hill-slope looking down,

The sweet song died, and a vague unrest
And a nameless longing filled her breast,— 10

* The recollection of some descendants of a Hessian deserter in the Revolutionary war bearing the name of Muller doubtless suggested the somewhat infelicitous title of a New England idyl. The poem had no real foundation in fact, though a hint of it may have been found in recalling an incident, trivial in itself, of a journey on the picturesque Maine seaboard with my sister some years before it was written. We [the poet and his sister] had stopped to rest our tired horse under the shade of an apple-tree, and refresh him with water from a little brook which rippled through the stone wall across the road. A very beautiful young girl in scantest summer attire was at work in the hay-field, and as we talked with her we noticed that she strove to hide her bare feet by raking hay over them, blushing as she did so, through the tan of her cheek and neck.

A wish that she hardly dared to own,
For somethig better than she had known.

The Judge rode slowly down the lane,
Smoothing his horse's chestnut mane.

He drew his bridle in the shade
Of the apple-trees, to greet the maid,

And asked a draught from the spring that flowed
Through the meadow across the road.

She stooped where the cool spring bubbled up,
And filled for him her small tin cup, 20

And blushed as she gave it, looking down
On her feet so bare, and her tattered gown.

"Thanks!" said the Judge; "a sweeter draught
From a fairer hand was never quaffed."

He spoke of the grass and flowers and trees,
Of the singing birds and the humming bees;

Then talked of the haying, and wondered whether
The cloud in the west would bring foul weather.

And Maud forgot her brier-torn gown,
And her graceful ankles bare and brown; 30

And listened, while a pleased surprise
Looked from her long-lashed hazel eyes.

At last, like one who for delay
Seeks a vain excuse, he rode away.

Maud Muller looked and sighed: "Ah me!
That I the Judge's bride might be!

"He would dress me up in silks so fine,
And praise and toast me at his wine.

"My father should wear a broadcloth coat;
My brother should sail a painted boat. 40

"I'd dress my mother so grand and gay,
And the baby should have a new toy each day.

"And I'd feed the hungry and clothe the poor,
And all should bless me who left our door."

The Judge looked back as he climbed the hill,
And saw Maud Muller standing still.

"A form more fair, a face more sweet,
Ne'er hath it been my lot to meet.

"And her modest answer and graceful air
Show her wise and good as she is fair. 50

"Would she were mine, and I to-day,
Like her, a harvester of hay;

"No doubtful balance of rights and wrongs,
Nor weary lawyers with endless tongues,

"But low of cattle and song of birds,
And health and quiet and loving words."

But he thought of his sisters, proud and cold,
And his mother, vain of her rank and gold.

So, closing his heart, the Judge rode on,
And Maud was left in the field alone. 60

But the lawyers smiled that afternoon,
When he hummed in court an old love-tune;

And the young girl mused beside the well
Till the rain on the unraked clover fell.

He wedded a wife of richest dower,
Who lived for fashion, as he for power.

Yet oft, in his marble hearth's bright glow,
He watched a picture come and go;

And sweet Maud Muller's hazel eyes
Looked out in their innocent surprise. 70

Oft, when the wine in his glass was red,
He longed for the wayside well instead;

And closed his eyes on his garnished rooms
To dream of meadows and clover-blooms.

And the proud man sighed, with a secret pain,
"Ah, that I were free again!

"Free as when I rode that day,
Where the barefoot maiden raked her hay."

She wedded a man unlearned and poor,
And many children played round her door. 80

But care and sorrow, and childbirth pain,
Left their traces on heart and brain.

And oft, when the summer sun shone hot
On the new-mown hay in the meadow lot,

And she heard the little spring brook fall
Over the roadside; through the wall,

In the shade of the apple-tree again
She saw a rider draw his rein;

And, gazing down with timid grace,
She felt his pleased eyes read her face. 90

Sometimes her narrow kitchen walls
Stretched away into stately halls,

The weary wheel to a spinnet turned,
The tallow candle an astral burned,

And for him who sat by the chimney lug,
Dozing and grumbling o'er pipe and mug,

A manly form at her side she saw,
And joy was duty and love was law

Then she took up her burden of life again,
Saying only, "It might have been "

100

Alas for maiden, alas for Judge,
For rich repiner and household drudge!

God pity them both! and pity us all,
Who vainly the dreams of youth recall

For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these "It might have been!"

Ah, well! for us all some sweet hope lies
Deeply buried from human eyes,

And, in the hereafter, angels may
Roll the stone from its grave away!

110

1854

* In the valuable and carefully prepared *History of Marblehead*, published in 1879 by Samuel Roads, Jr., it is stated that the crew of Captain Ireson, rather than himself, were responsible for the abandonment of the disabled vessel. To screen themselves they charged their captain with the crime. In view of this the writer of the ballad addressed the following letter to the historian —

Oak Knoll, Danvers, 5 mo 18, 1880

My dear Friend, I heartily thank thee for a copy of thy *History of Marblehead*. I have read it with great interest and think good use has been made of the abundant material. No town in Essex County has a record more honorable than Marblehead, no one has done more to develop the industrial interests of our New England seaboard, and certainly none have given such evidence of self-sacrificing patriotism. I am glad the story of it has been at last told, and told so well. I have now no doubt that thy version of Skipper Ireson's ride is the correct one. My verse was founded solely on a fragment of rhyme which I heard from one of my early schoolmates, a native of Marblehead.

I supposed the story to which it referred dated back at least a century. I knew nothing of the participators, and the narrative of the ballad was pure fancy. I am glad for the sake of truth and justice that the real facts are given in thy book. I certainly would not knowingly do injustice to any one, dead or living.

I am very truly thy friend,

John G. Whittier.

Skipper Ireson's Ride *

Of all the rides since the birth of time,

Told in story or sung in rhyme,—

On Apuleius's Golden Ass,²⁴

Or one-eyed Calender's horse of biass,²⁵

Witch astride of a human back,

Islam's prophet on Al-Borák,²⁶

The strangest ride that ever was sped

Was Ireson's, out from Marblehead!

Old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,

Tamed and feathered and carried in a cart 10

By the women of Marblehead!

Body of turkey, head of owl,

Wings a-droop like a rained-on fowl,

Feathered and ruffled in every part,

Skipper Ireson stood in the cart

Scores of women, old and young,

Strong of muscle, and glib of tongue,

Pushed and pulled up the rocky lane,

Shouting and singing the shrill refrain

"Here's Flud Orson, fur his hard heart,

20

Torr'd an' futherr'd an' corr'd in a cart

By the women o' Marblehead!"

Wrinkled scolds with hands on hips,

Girls in bloom of cheek and lips,

Wild-eyed, fice-limbed, such as chase

Bacchus round some antique vase,

Brief of skirt, with ankles bare,

Loose of kerchief and loose of hair,

With conch-shells blowing and fish-horns' twang,

Over and over the Mænads²⁷ sang 30

"Here's Flud Orson, fur his hard heart,

Torr'd an' futherr'd an' corr'd in a cart

By the women o' Marblehead!"

Small pity for him!—He sailed away

From a leaking ship in Chaleur Bay,—

Sailed away from a sinking wreck,

With his own town's-people on her deck!

"Lay by! lay by!" they called to him.

²⁴ "The Golden Ass" ("golden" signifying the excellence of the story) is an allusion to *Metamorphoseon, seu de Asino Auro*, *Libri XI*, by the Roman satirist of the second century, Lucius Apuleius. It tells of the magic transformation of a young man into an ass, and his adventures.

²⁵ Story in *Arabian Nights*, told by the third calender.

²⁶ A legendary white animal with wings said to have carried Mohammed to the seventh heaven, conducted by the Angel Gabriel.

²⁷ Followers of Bacchus, as represented in relief "round some antique [i.e., Grecian] vase."

Back he answered, "Sink or swim!
Brag of your catch of fish again!"
And off he sailed through the fog and rain!
Old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart
By the women of Marblehead!

Fathoms deep in dark Chaleur
That wreck shall lie forevermore.
Mother and sister, wife and maid,
Looked from the rocks of Marblehead
Over the moaning and rainy sea,—
Looked for the coming that might not be!
What did the winds and the sea-birds say
Of the cruel captain who sailed away?—
Old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart
By the women of Marblehead!

Through the street, on either side,
Up flew windows, doors swung wide;
Sharp-tongued spinsters, old wives gray,
Treble lent the fish-horn's bray.
Sea-worn grandsires, cripple-bound,
Hulks of old sailors run aground,
Shook head, and fist, and hat, and cane,
And cracked with curses the hoarse refrain:
"Here's Flud Oirson, fur his horrd horrt,
Torr'd an' futherr'd an' corr'd in a corrt
By the women o' Morble'ead!"

Sweetly along the Salem road
Bloom of orchard and lilac showed.
Little the wicked skipper knew
Of the fields so green and the sky so blue.
Riding there in his sorry trim,
Like an Indian idol glum and grim,
Scarcely he seemed the sound to hear
Of voices shouting, far and near:
"Here's Flud Oirson, fur his horrd horrt,
Torr'd an' futherr'd an' corr'd in a corrt
By the women o' Morble'ead!"

* Susanna Martin, an aged woman of Amesbury, Mass., was tried and executed for the alleged crime of witchcraft. Her home was in what is now known as Pleasant Valley on the Merrimac, a little above the old Ferry way, where, tradition says, an attempt was made to assassinate Sir Edmund Andros on his way to Falmouth (afterward Portland) and Pemaquid, which was frustrated by a warning timely given. Goody Martin was the only woman hanged on the north side of the Merrimac during the dreadful delusion. The aged wife of Judge Bradbury, who lived on

"Hear me, neighbors!" at last he cried,—
"What to me is this noisy ride?
What is the shame that clothes the skin
To the nameless horror that lives within?
Waking or sleeping, I see a wreck,
And hear a cry from a reeling deck!
Hate me and curse me,—I only dread
The hand of God and the face of the dead!"
Said old Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart
By the women of Marblehead!
Then the wife of the skipper lost at sea
Said, "God has touched him! why should we!"
Said an old wife mourning her only son,
"Cut the rogue's tether and let him run!"
So with soft relentings and rude excuse,
Half scorn, half pity, they cut him loose,
And gave him a cloak to hide him in,
And left him alone with his shame and sin.
Poor Floyd Ireson, for his hard heart,
Tarred and feathered and carried in a cart
By the women of Marblehead!
1828, 1857 1857

Mabel Martin *

A HARVEST IDYL

Proem

I call the old time back: I bring my lay
In tender memory of the summer day
When, where our native river lapsed away,
We dreamed it over, while the thrushes made
Songs of their own, and the great pine-trees laid
On warm noonlights the masses of their shade.
And *she* was with us, living o'er again
Her life in ours, despite of years and pain,—
The Autumn's brightness after latter rain.
Beautiful in her holy peace as one
Who stands, at evening, when the work is done,
Glorified in the setting of the sun!

the other side of the Powow River, was imprisoned and would have been put to death but for the collapse of the hideous persecution.

The substance of the poem which follows was published under the name of *The Witch's Daughter*, in the *National Era* in 1857. In 1875 my publishers desired to issue it with illustrations, and I then enlarged it and otherwise altered it to its present form. The principal addition was in the verses which constitute Part I.

Her memory makes our common landscape seem
Fairer than any of which painters dream,
Lights the brown hills and sings in every stream,

For she whose speech was always truth's pure gold
Heard, not unpleased, its simple legends told,
And loved with us the beautiful and old

I The River Valley

Across the level tableland,
A grassy, rarely trodden way,
With thinnest skirt of birchen spray

And stunted growth of cedar, leads
To where you see the dull plam fall
Sheer off, steep-slanted, ploughed by all

The seasons' rainfalls On its brink
The over-leaning harsbells swing,
With roots half bare the pine-trees cling,

And, through the shadow looking west,
You see the wavering river flow
Along a vale, that far below

Holds to the sun, the sheltering hills
And glimmering water-line between,
Broad fields of corn and meadows green,

And fruit-bent orchards grouped around
The low brown roofs and painted eaves,
And chimney-tops half hid in leaves

No warmer valley hides behind
Yon wind-scourged sand-dunes cold and bleak,
No fairer river comes to seek

The wave-sung welcome of the sea,
Or mark the northmost border line
Of sun-loved growths of nut and vine

Here, ground-fast in their native fields,
Untempted by the city's gain,
The quiet farmer folk remain

Who bear the pleasant name of Friends,
And keep their fathers' gentle ways
And simple speech of Bible days,

In whose neat homesteads woman holds
With modest ease her equal place,
And wears upon her tranquil face

The look of one who, merging not
Her self-hood in another's will,
Is love's and duty's handmaid still

Pass with me down the path that winds
Through bushes to the open land,
Where, close upon the river strand

You mark a cellar, vine o'erun,
Above whose wall of loosened stones
The sumach lifts its reddening cones,

And the black nightshade's berries shine,
And broad, unsightly buckdocks fold
The household ruin, century-old

Here, in the dim colonial time
Of sterner lives and gloomier faith,
A woman lived, tradition saith,

Who wrought her neighbors foul annoy,
And witched and plagued the country-side,
Till at the hangman's hand she died.

Sit with me while the western day
Falls slantwise down the quiet vale,
And, haply ere yon loitering sail,

That rounds the upper headland, falls
Below Deer Island's pines, or sees
Behind it Hawkswood's belt of trees

Rise black against the sinking sun,
My idyl of its days of old,
The valley's legend, shall be told

II The Husking

It was the pleasant harvest-time,
When cellar-bins are closely stowed,
And garrets bend beneath their load,

And the old swallow-haunted bairs,—
Brown-gabled, long, and full of seams
Through which the moted sunlight streams,

And winds blow freshly in, to shake
The red plumes of the roasted cocks,
And the loose hay-mow's scented locks,—

Are filled with summer's ripened stores,
Its odorous grass and barley sheaves,
From their low scaffolds to their eaves.

60

70

08

90

On Esek Harden's oaken floor,
 With many an autumn threshing worn,
 Lay the heaped ears of unhusked corn.

And thither came young men and maids,
 Beneath a moon that, large and low,
 Lit that sweet eve of long ago.

They took their places; some by chance,
 And others by a merry voice
 Or sweet smile guided to their choice.

How pleasantly the rising moon,
 Between the shadow of the mows,
 Looked on them through the great elm-boughs!

On sturdy boyhood, sun-embrowned,
 On girlhood with its solid curves
 Of healthful strength and painless nerves!

And jests went round, and laughs that made
 The house-dog answer with his howl,
 And kept astir the barn-yard fowl;

And quaint old songs their fathers sung
 In Derby dales and Yorkshire moors,
 Ere Norman William trod their shores;

And tales, whose merry license shook
 The fat sides of the Saxon thane,
 Forgetful of the hovering Dane,²⁸—

Rude plays to Celt and Cimbri known,
 The charms and riddles that beguiled
 On Oxus' ²⁹ banks the young world's child,—

That primal picture-speech wherein
 Have youth and maid the story told,
 So new in each, so dateless old,

Recalling pastoral Ruth ³⁰ in her
 Who waited, blushing and demure,
 The red-ear's kiss of forfeiture.³¹

III. The Witch's Daughter

But still the sweetest voice was mute
 That river-valley ever heard
 From lips of maid or throat of bird;

²⁸ Danish invasions of England around ninth and tenth centuries.

²⁹ Amu Darya, or Oxus, in Central Asia.

³⁰ See Ruth ii.

³¹ It was a custom at husking parties that the young man who shucked a red ear of corn could demand a kiss of a young woman.

For Mabel Martin sat apart,
 And let the hay-mow's shadow fall
 Upon the loveliest face of all.

She sat apart, as one forbid,
 Who knew that none would condescend
 To own the Witch-wife's child a friend.

The seasons scarce had gone their round,
 Since curious thousands thronged to see
 Her mother at the gallows-tree;

And mocked the prison-palsied limbs
 That faltered on the fatal stairs,
 And wan lip trembling with its prayers!

Few questioned of the sorrowing child,
 Or, when they saw the mother die,
 Dreamed of the daughter's agony.

They went up to their homes that day,
 As men and Christians justified:
 God willed it, and the wretch had died!

Dear God and Father of us all,
 Forgive our faith in cruel lies,—
 Forgive the blindness that denies!

Forgive thy creature when he takes,
 For the all-perfect love Thou art,
 Some grim creation of his heart.

Cast down our idols, overturn
 Our bloody altars; let us see
 Thyself in Thy humanity!

Young Mabel from her mother's grave
 Crept to her desolate hearth-stone,
 And wrestled with her fate alone;

With love, and anger, and despair,
 The phantoms of disordered sense,
 The awful doubts of Providence!

Oh, dreary broke the winter days,
 And dreary fell the winter nights
 When, one by one, the neighboring lights

Went out, and human sounds grew still,
 And all the phantom-peopled dark
 Closed round her hearth-fire's dying spark.

And summer days were sad and long,
 And sad and unaccompanied eves,
 And sadder sunset-tinted leaves,

And Indian Summer's airs of balm,
 She scarcely felt the soft caress,
 The beauty died of loneliness!

170

The school-boys jeered her as they passed,
 And, when she sought the house of prayer,
 Her mother's curse pursued her there

And still o'er many a neighboring door
 She saw the horseshoe's curved charm,
 To guard against her mother's harm

That mother, poor and sick and lame,
 Who daily, by the old arm-chair,
 Folded her withered hands in prayer,—

180

Who turned, in Salem's dreary jail,
 Her worn old Bible o'er and o'er,
 When her dim eyes could read no more!

Sore tried and pained, the poor girl kept
 Her faith, and trusted that her way,
 So dark, would somewhere meet the day

And still her weary wheel went round
 Day after day, with no relief
 Small leisure have the poor for grief

IV The Champion

So in the shadow Mabel sits,
 Untouched by mirth she sees and hears,
 Her smile is sadder than her tears

But cruel eyes have found her out,
 And cruel lips repeat her name,
 And taunt her with her mother's shame

She answered not with railing words,
 But drew her apron o'er her face,
 And, sobbing, glided from the place.

And only pausing at the door,
 Her sad eyes met the troubled gaze
 Of one who, in her better days,

200

Had been her warm and steady friend,
 Ere yet her mother's doom had made
 Even Esek Harden half afraid

He felt that mute appeal of tears,
 And, starting, with an angry frown,
 Hushed all the wicked murmurs down.

"Good neighbors mine," he sternly said,
 "This passes harmless mirth or jest,
 I brook no insult to my guest

210

"She is indeed her mother's child,
 But God's sweet pity ministers
 Unto no whiter soul than hers

"Let Goody ³² Martin rest in peace,
 I never knew her harm a fly,
 And witch or not, God knows—not I

"I know who swore her life away;
 And as God lives, I'd not condemn
 An Indian dog on word of them "

The broadest lands in all the town,
 The skill to guide, the power to awe,
 Were Harden's, and his word was law

220

None dared withstand him to his face,
 But one sly maiden spake aside.
 "The little witch is evil-eyed!

"Her mother only killed a cow,
 Or witched a chum or dairy-pan;
 But she, forsooth, must charm a man!"

V In the Shadow

190

Poor Mabel, homeward turning, passed
 The nameless terrors of the wood,
 And saw, as if a ghost pursued,

230

Her shadow gliding in the moon;
 The soft breath of the west-wind gave
 A chill as from her mother's grave.

How dreary seemed the silent house!
 Wide in the moonbeams' ghastly glare
 Its windows had a dead man's stare!

And, like a gaunt and spectral hand,
 The tremulous shadow of a birch
 Reached out and touched the door's low
 porch,

240

As if to lift its latch, hard by,
 A sudden warning call she heard,
 The night-cry of a boding bird.

³² "Goodwife," an archaic term for a married woman of humble rank.

She leaned against the door; her face,
 So fair, so young, so full of pain,
 White in the moonlight's silver rain.

The river, on its pebbled rim,
 Made music such as childhood knew;
 The door-yard tree was whispered through

By voices such as childhood's ear
 Had heard in moonlights long ago;
 And through the willow-boughs below

She saw the rippled waters shine;
 Beyond, in waves of shade and light,
 The hills rolled off into the night.

She saw and heard, but over all
 A sense of some transforming spell,
 The shadow of her sick heart fell.

And still across the wooded space
 The harvest lights of Harden shone,
 And song and jest and laugh went on.

And he, so gentle, true, and strong,
 Of men the bravest and the best,
 Had he, too, scorned her with the rest?

She strove to drown her sense of wrong,
 And in her old and simple way,
 To teach her bitter heart to pray.

Poor child! the prayer, begun in faith,
 Grew to a low, despairing cry
 Of utter misery: "Let me die!"

"Oh! take me from the scornful eyes,
 And hide me where the cruel speech
 And mocking finger may not reach!

"I dare not breathe my mother's name:
 A daughter's right I dare not crave
 To weep above her unblest grave!

"Let me not live until my heart,
 With few to pity, and with none
 To love me, hardens into stone.

"O God! have mercy on Thy child,
 Whose faith in Thee grows weak and small,
 And take me ere I lose it all!"

A shadow on the moonlight fell,
 And murmuring wind and wave became
 A voice whose burden was her name.

VI. The Betrothal

Had then God heard her? Had He sent
 His angel down? In flesh and blood,
 Before her Esek Harden stood!

He laid his hand upon her arm:
 "Dear Mabel, this no more shall be;
 Who scoffs at you must scoff at me.

"You know rough Esek Harden well;
 And if he seems no suitor gay,
 And if his hair is touched with gray,

"The maiden grown shall never find
 His heart less warm than when she smiled,
 Upon his knees a little child!"

Her tears of grief were tears of joy,
 As, folded in his strong embrace,
 She looked in Esek Harden's face.

"O truest friend of all!" she said,
 "God bless you for your kindly thought,
 And make me worthy of my lot!"

He led her forth, and, blent in one,
 Beside their happy pathway ran
 The shadows of the maid and man.

He led her through his dewy fields,
 To where the swinging lanterns glowed,
 And through the doors the huskers showed.

"Good friends and neighbors!" Esek said,
 "I'm weary of this lonely life;
 In Mabel see my chosen wife!

"She greets you kindly, one and all;
 The past is past, and all offence
 Falls harmless from her innocence.

"Henceforth she stands no more alone;
 You know what Esek Harden is;—
 He brooks no wrong to him or his.

"Now let the merriest tales be told,
 And let the sweetest songs be sung
 That ever made the old heart young!

"For now the lost has found a home;
 And a lone hearth shall brighter burn,
 As all the household joys return!"

Oh, pleasantly the harvest-moon,
Between the shadow of the mows,
Looked on them through the great elm-boughs!

On Mabel's curls of golden hair,
On Esek's shaggy strength it fell,
And the wind whispered, "It is well!"
1857 1875 330

*Telling the Bees **

Here is the place, ³³ right over the hill
Runs the path I took,
You can see the gap in the old wall still,
And the stepping-stones in the shallow brook.

There is the house, with the gate red-barred,
And the poplars tall,
And the barn's brown length, and the cattle-yard,
And the white horns tossing above the wall

There are the beehives ranged in the sun,
And down by the bunk
Of the brook are her poor flowers, weed-o'-errun,
Pansy and daffodil, rose and pink
10

A year has gone, as the tortoise goes,
Heavy and slow,
And the same rose blows, and the same sun glows,
And the same brook sings of a year ago

There's the same sweet clover-smell in the breeze,
And the June sun warm
Tangles his wings of fire in the trees,
Setting, as then, over Fernside farm
20

I mind me how with a lover's care
From my Sunday coat
I brushed off the burrs, and smoothed my hair,
And cooled at the brookside my brow and throat
Since we parted, a month had passed,—
To love, a year,
Down through the beeches I looked at last
On the little red gate and the well-sweep near

* A remarkable custom, brought from the Old Country, formerly prevailed in the rural districts of New England. On the death of a member of the family, the bees were at once informed of the event, and their hives dressed in mourning. This ceremonial was supposed to be necessary to prevent the swarms from leaving their hives and seeking a new home.

³³ Whittier's childhood home, which the poem intimately depicts.

I can see it all now,—the slantwise rain
Of light through the leaves,
The sundown's blaze on her window-pane,
The bloom of her roses under the eaves.
30

Just the same as a month before,—
The house and the trees,
The barn's brown gable, the vine by the door,—
Nothing changed but the hives of bees

Before them, under the garden wall,
Forward and back,
Went drearily singing the chore-girl small,
Draping each hive with a shred of black
40

Trembling, I listened the summer sun
Had the chill of snow,
For I knew she was telling the bees of one
Gone on the journey we all must go!

Then I said to myself, "My Mary weeps
For the dead to-day.
Haply her blind old grandsire sleeps
The fret and the pain of his age away!"

But her dog whined low, on the doorway sill,
With his cane to his chin,
The old man sat, and the chore-girl still
Sung to the bees stealing out and in.
50

And the song she was singing ever since
In my ear sounds on —
"Stay at home, pretty bees, fly not hence!
Mistress Mary is dead and gone!"
1858

Brown of Ossawatimie

John Brown of Ossawatimie spake on his dying
day
"I will not have to shrive my soul a priest in
Slavery's pay
But let some poor slave-mother whom I have
striven to free,
With her children, from the gallows-stair put up
a prayer for me!"

John Brown of Ossawatimie, they led him out
to die,
And lo! a poor slave-mother with her little child
pressed nigh.

Then the bold, blue eye grew tender, and the
old harsh face grew mild,
As he stooped between the jeering ranks and
kissed the negro's child!

The shadows of his stormy life that moment fell
apart;
And they who blamed the bloody hand forgave
the loving heart.
That kiss from all its guilty means redeemed
the good intent,
And round the grisly fighter's hair the martyr's
aureole bent!

Perish with him the folly that seeks through evil
good!
Long live the generous purpose unstained with
human blood!
Not the raid of midnight terror, but the thought
which underlies;
Not the borderer's pride of daring, but the
Christian's sacrifice.

Nevermore may yon Blue Ridges the Northern
rifle hear,
Nor see the light of blazing homes flash on the
negro's spear.
But let the free-winged angel Truth their guarded
passes scale,
To teach that right is more than might, and
justice more than mail!

So vainly shall Virginia set her battle in array;
In vain her trampling squadrons knead the winter
snow with clay.
She may strike the pouncing eagle, but she dares
not harm the dove;
And every gate she bars to Hate shall open wide
to Love!

1859

*My Playmate*³⁴

The pines were dark on Ramoth hill,³⁵
Their song was soft and low;
The blossoms in the sweet May wind
Were falling like the snow.

³⁴ Albert Mordell (in *Quaker Militant*) identifies the "playmate" as Mary Emerson Smith, the girl in "Memories." The poem was called "Eleanor," but was first printed with the present title. Tennyson admired it, and critics usually regard it as one of Whittier's best.

³⁵ About two miles from Amesbury.

The blossoms drifted at our feet,
The orchard birds sang clear;
The sweetest and the saddest day
It seemed of all the year.

For, more to me than birds or flowers,
My playmate left her home,
And took with her the laughing spring,
The music and the bloom.

10

She kissed the lips of kith and kin,
She laid her hand in mine:
What more could ask the bashful boy
Who fed her father's kine?

She left us in the bloom of May:
The constant years told o'er
Their seasons with as sweet May morns,
But she came back no more.

20

I walk, with noiseless feet, the round
Of uneventful years;
Still o'er and o'er I sow the spring
And reap the autumn ears.

She lives where all the golden year
Her summer roses blow;
The dusky children of the sun
Before her come and go.

There haply with her jewelled hands
She smooths her silken gown,—
No more the homespun lap wherein
I shook the walnuts down.

30

The wild grapes wait us by the brook,
The brown nuts on the hill,
And still the May-day flowers make sweet
The woods of Follymill.

The lilies blossom in the pond,
The bird builds in the tree,
The dark pines sing on Ramoth hill
The slow song of the sea.

40

I wonder if she thinks of them,
And how the old time seems,—
If ever the pines of Ramoth wood
Are sounding in her dreams.

I see her face, I hear her voice;
Does she remember mine?
And what to her is now the boy
Who fed her father's kine?

What cares she that the orioles build
 For other eyes than ours,—
 That other hands with nuts are filled,
 And other laps with flowers?

O playmate in the golden time!
 Our mossy seat is green,
 Its fringing violets blossom yet,
 The old trees o'er it lean

The winds so sweet with birch and fern
 A sweeter memory blow,
 And there in spring the veeries sing
 The song of long ago

And still the pines of Ramoth wood
 Are moaning like the sea,—
 The moaning of the sea of change
 Between myself and thee!

1859-60

1860

"Ein Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott" ³⁶

LUTHER'S HYMN

We wait beneath the furnace-blast
 The pangs of transformation,
 Not painlessly doth God recast
 And mould anew the nation.
 Hot burns the fire
 Where wrongs expire,
 Nor spares the hand
 That from the land
 Uproots the ancient evil.

The hand-breadth cloud the sages feared
 Its bloody rain is dropping,
 The poison plant the fathers spared
 All else is overtopping
 East, West, South, North,
 It curses the earth;
 All justice dies,
 And fraud and lies
 Live only in its shadow

What gives the wheat-field blades of steel?
 What points the rebel cannon?
 What sets the roaring rabble's heel
 On the old star-spangled pennon?
 What breaks the oath
 Of the men o' the South?

³⁶ "A strong fortress is our God "

50

What whets the knife
 For the Union's life?—
 Hark to the answer! Slavery!

60

Then waste no blows on lesser foes
 In strife unworthy freemen
 God lifts to-day the veil, and shows
 The features of the demon!
 O North and South,
 Its victims both,
 Can ye not cry,
 "Let slavery die!"
 And union find in freedom?

10

20

What though the cast-out spirit tear
 The nation in his going?
 We who have shared the guilt must share
 The pang of his o'erthrowing!
 Whate'er the loss,
 Whate'er the cross,
 Shall they complain
 Of present pain
 Who trust in God's hereafter?

For who that leans on His right arm
 Was ever yet forsaken?
 What righteous cause can suffer harm
 If He its part has taken?
 Though wild and loud,
 And dark the cloud,
 Behind its folds
 His hand upholds
 The calm sky of to-morrow!

Above the maddening cry for blood,
 Above the wild war-drumming,
 Let Freedom's voice be heard, with good
 The evil overcoming.
 Give prayer and purse
 To stay the Curse
 Whose wrong we share,
 Whose shame we bear,
 Whose end shall gladden Heaven!

In vain the bells of war shall ring
 Of triumphs and revenges,
 While still is spared the evil thing
 That severs and estranges.
 But blest the ear
 That yet shall hear

30

40

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60

The jubilant bell
That rings the knell
Of Slavery forever!

Then let the selfish lip be dumb,
And hushed the breath of sighing;
Before the joy of peace must come
The pain of purifying.
God give us grace
Each in his place
To bear his lot,
And, murmuring not,
Endure and wait and labor!

1861

Cobbler Keezar's Vision ³⁷

The beaver cut his timber
With patient teeth that day,
The minks were fish-wards, and the crows
Surveyors of highway,—

When Keezar sat on the hillside
Upon his cobbler's form,
With a pan of coals on either hand
To keep his waxed-ends warm.

And there, in the golden weather,
He stitched and hammered and sung;
In the brook he moistened his leather,
In the pewter mug his tongue.

Well knew the tough old Teuton
Who brewed the stoutest ale,
And he paid the goodwife's reckoning
In the coin of song and tale.

The songs they still are singing
Who dress the hills of vine,
The tales that haunt the Brocken ³⁸
And whisper down the Rhine.

Woodsy and wild and lonesome,
The swift stream wound away,
Through birches and scarlet maples
Flashing in foam and spray,—

³⁷ Written for a Horticultural Festival. Cobbler Keezar, a notable character among the first settlers of the Merrimack valley, is described more fully in "The Border War of 1708," in Whittier's *Literary Recreations and Miscellanies* (1854), and *Prose Works* (1866).

³⁸ Mountain in Prussia.

70 Down on the sharp-horned ledges
Plunging in steep cascade,
Tossing its white-maned waters
Against the hemlock's shade.

Woodsy and wild and lonesome,
East and west and north and south;
30 Only the village of fishers
Down at the river's mouth;

Only here and there a clearing,
80 With its farm-house rude and new,
And tree-stumps, swart as Indians,
Where the scanty harvest grew.

No shout of home-bound reapers,
No vintage-song he heard,
And on the green no dancing feet
The merry violin stirred. 40

"Why should folk be glum," said Keezar,
"When Nature herself is glad,
And the painted woods are laughing
At the faces so sour and sad?"

Small heed had the careless cobbler
What sorrow of heart was theirs
Who travailed in pain with the births of God,
And planted a state with prayers,—

10 Hunting of witches and warlocks,
Smiting the heathen horde,—
One hand on the mason's trowel,
And one on the soldier's sword! 50

But give him his ale and cider,
Give him his pipe and song,
Little he cared for Church or State,
Or the balance of right and wrong.

"'Tis work, work, work," he muttered,—
"And for rest a snuffle of psalms!"

20 He smote on his leathern apron
With his brown and waxen palms. 60

"Oh for the purple harvests
Of the days when I was young!
For the merry grape-stained maidens,
And the pleasant songs they sung!

"Oh for the breath of vineyards,
Of apples and nuts and wine!
For an oar to row and a breeze to blow
Down the grand old river Rhine!"

A tear in his blue eye glistened,
 And dropped on his beard so gray
 "Old, old am I," said Keezar,
 "And the Rhine flows far away!"

But a cunning man was the cobbler,
 He could call the birds from the trees,
 Charm the black snake out of the ledges,
 And bring back the swarming bees

All the virtues of herbs and metals,
 All the lore of the woods, he knew,
 And the arts of the Old World mingled
 With the marvels of the New

Well he knew the tricks of magic,
 And the lapstone on his knee
 Had the gift of the Mormon's goggles³⁹
 Or the stone of Doctor Dee⁴⁰

For the mighty master Agrippa⁴¹
 Wrought it with spell and rhyme
 From a fragment of mystic moonstone
 In the tower of Nettesheim

To a cobbler Minnesinger
 The marvellous stone gave he,—
 And he gave it, in turn, to Keezar,
 Who brought it over the sea

He held up that mystic lapstone,
 He held it up like a lens,
 And he counted the long years coming
 By twenties and by tens

"One hundred years," quoth Keezar,
 "And fifty have I told—
 Now open the new before me,
 And shut me out the old!"

Like a cloud of mist, the blackness
 Rolled from the magic stone,
 And a marvellous picture mingled
 The unknown and the known

Still ran the stream to the river,
 And river and ocean joined,

³⁹ Spectacles which Joseph Smith wore to translate the supposedly supernatural messages written in cuneiform characters on gold plates.

⁴⁰ Local character who claimed to be an astrologer. He died in 1608.

⁴¹ Cornelius Heinrich Agrippa (called Agrippa of Nettesheim, 1486-1535), German philosopher and student of alchemy and magic. See also introduction to *Snow-Bound*

And there were the bluffs and the blue sea-line,
 And cold north hills behind

But the mighty forest was broken
 By many a steepled town,
 By many a white-walled farm-house,
 And many a gainer brown

Turning a score of mill-wheels,
 The stream no more ran free,
 White sails on the winding river,
 White sails on the far-off sea

Below in the noisy village
 The flags were floating gay,
 And shone on a thousand faces
 The light of a holiday

Swiftly the rival ploughmen
 Turned the brown earth from their shares;
 Here were the farmer's treasures,
 There were the craftsman's wares.

Golden the goodwife's butter,
 Ruby her currant-wine,
 Grand were the strutting turkeys,
 Fat were the beeves and swine.

Yellow and red were the apples,
 And the ripe pears russet-brown,
 And the peaches had stolen blushes
 From the girls who shook them down.

And with blooms of hill and wildwood,
 That shame the toil of art,
 Mingled the gorgeous blossoms
 Of the garden's tropic heart.

"What is it I see?" said Keezar:
 "Am I here, or am I there?
 Is it a fête at Bingen?
 Do I look on Frankfort fair?"

"But where are the clowns and puppets,
 And imps with horns and tail?
 And where are the Rhenish flagons?
 And where is the foaming ale?"

"Strange things, I know, will happen,—
 Strange things the Lord permits;
 But that doughty folk should be jolly
 Puzzles my poor old wits

*Amy Wentworth**To William Bradford*

"Here are smiling manly faces,
And the maiden's step is gay;
Nor sad by thinking, nor mad by drinking,
Nor mopes, nor fools, are they.

"Here's pleasure without regretting,
And good without abuse,
The holiday and the bridal
Of beauty and of use.

"Here's a priest and there is a Quaker,
Do the cat and dog agree?
Have they burned the stocks for ovenwood?
Have they cut down the gallows-tree?

"Would the old folk know their children?
Would they own the graceless town,
With never a ranter to worry
And never a witch to drown?"

Loud laughed the cobbler Keezar,
Laughed like a school-boy gay;
Tossing his arms above him,
The lapstone rolled away.

It rolled down the rugged hillside,
It spun like a wheel bewitched,
It plunged through the leaning willows,
And into the river pitched.

There, in the deep, dark water,
The magic stone lies still,
Under the leaning willows
In the shadow of the hill.

But oft the idle fisher
Sits on the shadowy bank,
And his dreams make marvellous pictures
Where the wizard's lapstone sank.

And, still, in the summer twilights,
When the river seems to run
Out from the inner glory,
Warm with the melted sun,

The weary mill-girl lingers
Beside the charmed stream,
And the sky and the golden water
Shape and color her dream.

Fair wave the sunset gardens,
The rosy signals fly;
Her homestead beckons from the cloud,
And love goes sailing by.

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As they who watch by sick-beds find relief
Unwittingly from the great stress of grief
And anxious care, in fantasies outwrought
From the hearth's embers flickering low, or caught
From whispering wind, or tread of passing feet
Or vagrant memory calling up some sweet
Snatch of old song or romance, whence or why
They scarcely know or ask,—so, thou and I,
Nursed in the faith that Truth alone is strong
In the endurance which outwears Wrong,
With meek persistence baffling brutal force,
And trusting God against the universe,—
We, doomed to watch a strife we may not share
With other weapons than the patriot's prayer,
Yet owning, with full hearts and moistened eyes,
The awful beauty of self-sacrifice,
And wrung by keenest sympathy for all
Who give their loved ones for the living wall
'Twixt law and treason,—in this evil day
May haply find, through automatic play
Of pen and pencil, solace to our pain,
And hearten others with the strength we gain.
I know it has been said our times require
No play of art, nor dalliance with the lyre,
No weak essay with Fancy's chloroform
To calm the hot, mad pulses of the storm,
But the stern war-blast rather, such as sets
The battle's teeth of serriced bayonets,
And pictures grim as Vernet's.⁴² Yet with these
Some softer tints may blend, and milder keys
Relieve the storm-stunned ear. Let us keep sweet,
If so we may, our hearts, even while we eat
The bitter harvest of our own device
And half a century's moral cowardice.
As Nürnberg sang while Wittenberg defied,⁴³
And Kranach⁴⁴ painted by his Luther's side,
And through the war-march of the Puritan
The silver stream of Marvell's⁴⁵ music ran,
So let the household melodies be sung,

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⁴² Antoine Charles Horace (known as Carle) Vernet (1758–1835), accompanied Napoleon to Italy, where he painted battle scenes.

⁴³ Where Martin Luther began the Reformation.

⁴⁴ Lucas Kranach (1472–1553) painted portraits of his friends, Luther and Melancthon, and of Biblical subjects.

⁴⁵ Andrew Marvell (1621–78), English poet and satirist. Defended Milton after Restoration, satirized Charles II and Monarchy.

The pleasant pictures on the wall be hung,—
 So let us hold against the hosts of night
 And slavery all our vantage-ground of light
 Let Treason boast its savagery, and shake
 From its flag-folds its symbol rattlesnake,
 Nurse its fine arts, lay human skins in tan,
 And carve its pipe-bowls from the bones of man.
 And make the tale of Fijian banquets dull
 By drinking whiskey from a loyal skull,—
 But let us guard, till this sad war shall cease,
 (God grant it soon!) the graceful arts of peace
 No foes are conquered who the victors teach
 Their vandal manners and barbaric speech

And while, with hearts of thankfulness, we bear
 Of the great common burden our full share,
 Let none upbraid us that the waves entice
 Thy sea-dipped pencil, or some quaint device,
 Rhythmic and sweet, beguiles my pen away
 From the sharp stripes and sorrows of to-day
 Thus, while the east-wind keen from Labrador
 Sings in the leafless elms, and from the shore
 Of the great sea comes the monotonous roar
 Of the long-breaking surf, and all the sky
 Is gray with cloud, home-bound and dull, I try
 To time a simple legend to the sounds
 Of winds in the woods, and waves on pebbled
 bounds,—

A song for oars to chime with, such as might
 Be sung by tired sea-painters, who at night
 Look from their hemlock camps, by quiet cove
 Or beach, moon-lighted, on the waves they love
 (So hast thou looked, when level sunset lay
 On the calm bosom of some Eastern bay,
 And all the spray-moist rocks and waves that
 rolled

Up the white sand-slopes flashed with ruddy gold)
 Something it has—a flavor of the sea,
 And the sea's freedom—which reminds of thee
 Its faded picture, dimly smiling down
 From the blurred fresco of the ancient town,
 I have not touched with warmer tints in vain,
 If, in this dark, sad year, it steals one thought
 from pain

Her fingers shame the ivory keys
 They dance so light along,
 The bloom upon her parted lips
 Is sweeter than the song.

40 O perfumed suitor, spare thy smiles!
 Her thoughts are not of thee,
 She better loves the salted wind,
 The voices of the sea.

Her heart is like an outbound ship
 That at its anchor swings,
 The murmur of the stranded shell
 Is in the song she sings. 90

50 She sings, and, smiling, hears her praise,
 But dreams the while of one
 Who watches from his sea-blown deck
 The icebergs in the sun

She questions all the winds that blow,
 And every fog-wicath dim,
 And bids the sea-birds flying north
 Bear messages to him

She speeds them with the thanks of men 100
 He perilled life to save,
 And grateful prayers like holy oil
 To smooth for him the wave

60 Brown Viking of the fishing-smack!
 Fair toast of all the town!—
 The skipper's jerkin ill becomes
 The lady's silken gown!

But ne'er shall Amy Wentworth wear
 For him the blush of shame
 Who dares to set his manly gifts
 Against her ancient name 110

70 The stream is brightest at its spring,
 And blood is not like wine,
 Nor honored less than he who heirs
 Is he who founds a line

Full lightly shall the prize be won,
 If love be Fortune's spur,
 And never maiden stoops to him
 Who lifts himself to her.

Her home is brave in Jaffrey Street,
 With stately stairways worn
 By feet of old Colonial knights
 And ladies gentle-born 120

80 Still green about its ample porch
 The English ivy twines,
 Trained back to show in English oak
 The herald's carven signs.

And on her, from the wainscot old,
 Ancestral faces frown,—
 And this has worn the soldier's sword,
 And that the judge's gown.

But, strong of will and proud as they,
 She walks the gallery floor
 As if she trod her sailor's deck
 By stormy Labrador!

The sweetbrier blooms on Kittery-side,
 And green are Eliot's bowers;
 Her garden is the pebbled beach,
 The mosses are her flowers.

She looks across the harbor-bar
 To see the white gulls fly;
 His greeting from the Northern sea
 Is in their clanging cry.

She hums a song, and dreams that he,
 As in its romance old,
 Shall homeward ride with silken sails
 And masts of beaten gold!

Oh, rank is good, and gold is fair,
 And high and low mate ill;
 But love has never known a law
 Beyond its own sweet will!

1862

*Barbara Frietchie **

Up from the meadows rich with corn,
 Clear in the cool September morn,

The clustered spires of Frederick stand
 Green-walled by the hills of Maryland.

Round about them orchards sweep,
 Apple and peach tree fruited deep,

Fair as the garden of the Lord
 To the eyes of the famished rebel horde,

On that pleasant morn of the early fall
 When Lee marched over the mountain wall;

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* This poem was written in strict conformity to the account of the incident as I had it from respectable and trustworthy sources. It has since been the subject of a good deal of conflicting testimony, and the story was probably incorrect in some of its details. It is admitted by all that Barbara Frietchie was no myth, but a worthy and highly esteemed gentlewoman, intensely loyal and a hater of the Slavery Rebellion, holding her Union flag sacred and keeping it with her Bible; that when the Confederates halted

Over the mountains winding down,
 Horse and foot, into Frederick town.

130 Forty flags with their silver stars,
 Forty flags with their crimson bars,

Flapped in the morning wind: the sun
 Of noon looked down, and saw not one.

Up rose old Barbara Frietchie then,
 Bowed with her fourscore years and ten;

Bravest of all in Frederick town,
 She took up the flag the men hauled down;

20

In her attic window the staff she set,
 To show that one heart was loyal yet.

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Up the street came the rebel tread,
 Stonewall Jackson riding ahead.

Under his slouched hat left and right
 He glanced; the old flag met his sight.

"Halt!"—the dust-brown ranks stood fast.
 "Fire!"—out blazed the rifle-blast.

It shivered the window, pane and sash;
 It rent the banner with seam and gash.

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Quick, as it fell, from the broken staff
 Dame Barbara snatched the silken scarf.

She leaned far out on the window-sill,
 And shook it forth with a royal will.

"Shoot, if you must, this old gray head,
 But spare your country's flag," she said.

A shade of sadness, a blush of shame,
 Over the face of the leader came;

The nobler nature within him stirred
 To life at that woman's deed and word;

40

"Who touches a hair of yon gray head
 Dies like a dog! March on!" he said.

All day long through Frederick street
 Sounded the tread of marching feet:

before her house, and entered her dooryard, she denounced them in vigorous language, shook her cane in their faces, and drove them out; and when General Burnside's troops followed close upon Jackson's, she waved her flag and cheered them. It is stated that May Quantrell, a brave and loyal lady in another part of the city, did wave her flag in sight of the Confederates. It is possible that there has been a blending of the two incidents.

All day long that free flag tost
Over the heads of the rebel host

Ever its torn folds rose and fell
On the loyal winds that loved it well,

And through the hill-gaps sunset light
Shone over it with a warm good-night.

Barbara Frutchie's work is o'er,
And the Rebel rides on his raids no more.

Honor to her! and let a tear
Fall, for her sake, on Stonewall's bier.

Over Barbara Frutchie's grave,
Flag of Freedom and Union, wave!

Peace and order and beauty draw
Round thy symbol of light and law;

And ever the stars above look down
On thy stairs below in Fredrick town!

1863

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Snow-Bound

A WINTER IDYL

*To the Memory of the Household It Describes
This Poem Is Dedicated by the Author*

The inmates of the family at the Whittier homestead who are referred to in the poem were my father, mother, my brother and two sisters, and my uncle and aunt, both unmarried. In addition, there was the distinct school master, who boarded with us. The "not unfear'd, half-welcome guest" was Harnet Livermore, daughter of Judge Livermore, of New Hampshire, a young woman of fine natural ability, enthusiastic, eccentric, with slight control over her violent temper, which sometimes made her religious profession doubtful. She was equally ready to exhort in school-house prayer-meetings and dance in a Washington ball-room, while her father was a member of congress. She early embraced the doctrine of the Second Advent, and felt it her duty to proclaim the Lord's speedy coming. With this message she crossed the Atlantic and spent the greater part of a long life in travelling over Europe and Asia. She lived some time with Lady Hester Stanhope, a woman as fantastic and mentally strained as herself, on the slope of Mt. Lebanon, but finally quarrelled with her in regard to two white horses with red marks on their backs which suggested the idea of saddles, on which her titled hostess expected to ride into Jerusalem with the Lord. A friend of mine found her, when quite an old woman, wandering in Syria with a tribe of Arabs, who with the Oriental notion that madness is inspiration, accepted her as their prophetess and leader. At the time referred to in *Snow-Bound* she was boarding at the Rocks Village, about two miles from us.

In my boyhood, in our lonely farm-house, we had scanty sources of information, few books and only a small weekly newspaper. Our only annual was the Almanac. Under such circumstances story-telling was a necessary resource in the long winter evenings. My father when a young man had traversed the wilderness to Canada, and could tell us of his adventures with Indians and wild beasts, and of his sojourn in the French villages. My uncle was ready with his record of hunting and fishing and, it must be confessed, with

stones which he at least half believed, of witchcraft and apparitions. My mother, who was born in the Indian-haunted region of Somersworth, New Hampshire, between Dover and Portsmouth, told us of the inroads of the savages, and the narrow escape of her ancestors. She described strange people who lived on the Piscataqua and Cocheco, among whom was Bantam the sorcerer. I have in my possession the wizard's "conjuring book," which he solemnly opened when consulted. It is a copy of Cornelius Agrippa's *Magic*, printed in 1651, dedicated to Dr. Robert Child, who, like Michael Scott, had learned

*"the art of glamorie
In Padua beyond the sea,"*

and who is famous in the annals of Massachusetts, where he was at one time a resident, as the first man who dared petition the General Court for liberty of conscience. The full title of the book is *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, by Henry Cornelius Agrippa, Knight, Doctor of both Laws, Counsellor to Cæsar's Sacred Majesty and Judge of the Prerogative Court.

"As the Spirits of Darkness be stronger in the dark, so Good Spirits, which be Angels of Light, are augmented not only by the Divine light of the Sun, but also by our common VVood Fire: and as the Celestial Fire drives away dark spirits, so also this our Fire of VVood doth the same."

COR. AGRIPPA, *Occult Philosophy*, Book I, ch. v.

*"Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river and the heaven,
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm."*

EMERSON. *The Snow Storm.*

The sun that brief December day
 Rose cheerless over hills of gray,
 And, darkly circled, gave at noon
 A sadder light than waning moon.
 Slow tracing down the thickening sky
 Its mute and ominous prophecy,
 A portent seeming less than threat,
 It sank from sight before it set.
 A chill no coat, however stout,
 Of homespun stuff could quite shut out,
 A hard, dull bitterness of cold,
 That checked, mid-vein, the circling race
 Of life-blood in the sharpened face,
 The coming of the snow-storm told.
 The wind blew east; we heard the roar
 Of Ocean on his wintry shore,
 And felt the strong pulse throbbing there
 Beat with low rhythm our inland air.

Meanwhile we did our nightly chores,—
 Brought in the wood from out of doors,
 Littered the stalls, and from the mows
 Raked down the herd's-grass for the cows:
 Heard the horse whinnying for his corn;
 And, sharply clashing horn on horn,
 Impatient down the stanchion rows
 The cattle shake their walnut bows;
 While, peering from his early perch
 Upon the scaffold's pole of birch,
 The cock his crested helmet bent
 And down his querulous challenge sent.

Unwarmed by any sunset light
 The gray day darkened into night,
 A night made hoary with the swarm
 And whirl-dance of the blinding storm,
 As zigzag, wavering to and fro,
 Crossed and recrossed the winged snow:
 And ere the early bedtime came
 The white drift piled the window-frame,
 And through the glass the clothes-line posts
 Looked in like tall and sheeted ghosts.

So all night long the storm roared on:
 The morning broke without a sun;
 In tiny spherule traced with lines
 Of Nature's geometric signs,
 In starry flake, and pellicle,
 All day the hoary meteor fell;
 And, when the second morning shone,

We looked upon a world unknown,
 On nothing we could call our own.
 Around the glistening wonder bent
 The blue walls of the firmament,
 No cloud above, no earth below,—
 A universe of sky and snow!
 The old familiar sights of ours
 Took marvellous shapes; strange domes and towers
 Rose up where sty or corn-crib stood,
 10 Or garden-wall, or belt of wood;
 A smooth white mound the brush-pile showed,
 A fenceless drift that once was road;
 The bridle-post an old man sat
 60 With loose-flung coat and high cocked hat;
 The well-curb had a Chinese roof;
 And even the long sweep, high aloof,
 In its slant splendor, seemed to tell
 Of Pisa's leaning miracle.

A prompt, decisive man, no breath
 20 Our father wasted: "Boys, a path!"
 Well pleased, (for when did farmer boy
 Count such a summons less than joy?)
 Our buskins on our feet we drew;
 70 With mittened hands, and caps drawn low,
 To guard our necks and ears from snow,
 We cut the solid whiteness through.
 And, where the drift was deepest, made
 A tunnel walled and overlaid
 With dazzling crystal: we had read
 30 Of rare Aladdin's wondrous cave,⁴⁶
 And to our own his name we gave,
 With many a wish the luck were ours
 To test his lamp's supernal powers.
 80 We reached the barn with merry din,
 And roused the prisoned brutes within.
 The old horse thrust his long head out,
 And grave with wonder gazed about;
 The cock his lusty greeting said,
 And forth his speckled harem led;
 The oxen lashed their tails, and hooked,
 40 And mild reproach of hunger looked;
 The horned patriarch of the sheep,
 Like Egypt's Amun⁴⁷ roused from sleep,
 90 Shook his sage head with gesture mute,
 And emphasized with stamp of foot.

⁴⁶ Story in *Arabian Nights*. When Aladdin rubbed the magic lamp, a jinni appeared to fulfill his wish.

⁴⁷ Egyptian god represented as a ram.

All day the gusty north-wind bore
 The loosening drift its breath before,
 Low circling round its southern zone,
 The sun through dazzling snow-mist shone.
 No church-bell lent its Christian tone
 To the savage air, no social smoke
 Curled over woods of snow-hung oak
 A solitude made more intense
 By dreary-voiced elements,
 The shrieking of the mindless wind,
 The moaning tree-boughs swaying blind,
 And on the glass the unmeaning beat
 Of ghostly finger-tips of sleet
 Beyond the circle of our hearth
 No welcome sound of toil or mirth
 Unbound the spell, and testified
 Of human life and thought outside.
 We minded that the sharpest ear
 The buried brooklet could not hear,
 The music of whose liquid lip
 Had been to us companionship,
 And, in our lonely life, had grown
 To have an almost human tone

As night drew on, and, from the crest
 Of wooded knolls that ridged the west,
 The sun, a snow-blown traveller, sank
 From sight beneath the smothering bank,
 We piled, with care, our nightly stack
 Of wood against the chimney-back,—
 The oaken log, green, huge, and thick,
 And on its top the stout back-stick;
 The knotty forestick laid apart,
 And filled between with curious art
 The ragged brush, then, hovering near,
 We watched the first red blaze appear,
 Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam
 On whitewashed wall and sagging beam,
 Until the old, rude-furnished room
 Burst, flower-like, into rosy bloom,
 While radiant with a mimic flame
 Outside the sparkling drift became,
 And through the bare-boughed lilac-tree
 Our own warm hearth seemed blazing free
 The crane and pendent trammels showed,
 The Turks' heads on the andirons glowed;
 While childish fancy, prompt to tell
 The meaning of the miracle,
 Whispered the old rhyme: "*Under the tree,*

*When fire outdoors burns merrily,
 There the witches are making tea"*

The moon above the castle wood
 Shone at its full, the hill-range stood
 Transfigured in the silver flood,
 Its blown snows flashing cold and keen,
 Dead white, save where some sharp ravine
 Took shadow, or the sombre green
 Of hemlocks turned to pitchy black
 Against the whiteness at their back
 For such a world and such a night
 Most fitting that unwarming light,
 Which only seemed where'er it fell
 To make the coldness visible.

Shut in from all the world without,
 We sat the clean-winged hearth about,
 Content to let the north-wind roar
 In baffled rage at pane and door,
 While the red logs before us beat
 The frost-line back with tropic heat,
 And ever, when a louder blast
 Shook beam and rafter as it passed,
 The merrier up its roaring draught
 The great throat of the chimney laughed;
 The house-dog on his paws outspread
 Laid to the fire his drowsy head,
 The cat's dark silhouette on the wall
 A couchant tiger's seemed to fall,
 And, for the winter fireside meet,
 Between the andirons' straddling feet,
 The mug of cider simmered slow,
 The apples sputtered in a row,
 And, close at hand, the basket stood
 With nuts from brown October's wood

What matter how the night behaved?
 What matter how the north-wind raved?
 Blow high, blow low, not all its snow
 Could quench our hearth-fire's ruddy glow.
 O Time and Change!—with hair as gray
 As was my sire's that winter day,
 How strange it seems, with so much gone
 Of life and love, to still live on!
 Ah, brother! ⁴⁸ only I and thou
 Are left of all that circle now,—
 The dear home faces whereupon
 That fitful firelight paled and shone

⁴⁸ Matthew, Whittier's younger brother, died in 1883, aged seventy-one.

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Henceforward, listen as we will,
 The voices of that hearth are still;
 Look where we may, the wide earth o'er,
 Those lighted faces smile no more.
 We tread the paths their feet have worn,
 We sit beneath their orchard trees,
 We hear, like them, the hum of bees
 And rustle of the bladed corn;
 We turn the pages that they read,
 Their written words we linger o'er,
 But in the sun they cast no shade,
 No voice is heard, no sign is made,
 No step is on the conscious floor!
 Yet Love will dream, and Faith will trust,
 (Since He who knows our need is just,)
 That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
 Alas for him who never sees
 The stars shine through his cypress-trees!
 Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
 Nor looks to see the breaking day
 Across the mournful marbles play!
 Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,
 The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
 That Life is ever lord of Death,
 And Love can never lose its own!

We sped the time with stories old,
 Wrought puzzles out, and riddles told,
 Or stammered from our school-book lore
 "The Chief of Gambia's golden shore."
 How often since, when all the land
 Was clay in Slavery's shaping hand,
 As if a far-blown trumpet stirred
 The languorous sin-sick air, I heard:
*"Does not the voice of reason cry,
 Claim the first right which Nature gave,
 From the red scourge of bondage fly,
 Nor deign to live a burdened slave!"*⁴⁹
 Our father rode again his ride⁵⁰
 On Memphremagog's wooded side;
 Sat down again to moose and samp
 In trapper's hut and Indian camp;
 Lived o'er the old idyllic ease
 Beneath St. François' hemlock-trees;
 Again for him the moonlight shone
 On Norman cap and bodiced zone;

Again he heard the violin play
 Which led the village dance away.
 And mingled in its merry whirl
 190 The grandam and the laughing girl.
 Or, nearer home, our steps he led
 Where Salisbury's level marshes spread
 Mile-wide as flies the laden bee,
 Where merry mowers, hale and strong,
 Swept, scythe on scythe, their swaths along 240
 The low green prairies of the sea.
 We shared the fishing off Boar's Head,
 And round the rocky Isles of Shoals
 The hake-broil on the drift-wood coals;
 200 The chowder on the sand-beach made,
 Dipped by the hungry, steaming hot,
 With spoons of clam-shell from the pot.
 We heard the tales of witchcraft old,
 And dream and sign and marvel told
 To sleepy listeners as they lay 250
 Stretched idly on the salted hay,
 Adrift along the winding shores,
 When favoring breezes deigned to blow
 The square sail of the gundelow
 210 And idle lay the useless oars.

Our mother,⁵¹ while she turned her wheel
 Or run the new-knit stocking-heel,
 Told how the Indian hordes came down
 At midnight on Cocheco town,
 And how her own great-uncle bore 260
 His cruel scalp-mark to fourscore.
 Recalling, in her fitting phrase,
 So rich and picturesque and free,
 (The common unrhymed poetry
 220 Of simple life and country ways,)
 The story of her early days,—
 She made us welcome to her home;
 Old hearths grew wide to give us room;
 We stole with her a frightened look
 At the gray wizard's conjuring-book,⁵² 270
 The fame whereof went far and wide
 Through all the simple country side;
 We heard the hawks at twilight play,
 The boat-horn on Piscataqua,
 230 The loon's weird laughter far away;
 We fished her little trout-brook, knew
 What flowers in wood and meadow grew,

⁴⁹ From "The African Chief," by Sarah Wentworth Morton.

⁵⁰ The poet's father, John Whittier, made several trips to Canada when he was a young man. He died in 1830.

⁵¹ Abigail Hussey Whittier (1781-1857).

⁵² Agrippa—see Whittier's introduction to this poem.

What sunny hillsides autumn-brown
 She climbed to shake the ripe nuts down,
 Saw where in sheltered cove and bay
 The ducks' black squadron anchored lay,
 And heard the wild-geese calling loud
 Beneath the gray November cloud

Then, haply, with a look more grave,
 And soberer tone, some tale she gave
 From painful Sewel's ancient tome,⁵³
 Beloved in every Quaker home,
 Of faith fire-winged by martyrdom,
 Or Chalkley's Journal,⁵⁴ old and quaint,—
 Gentlest of skippers, rare sea-saint!—
 Who, when the dreary calms prevailed,
 And water-butt and bread-cask failed,
 And cruel, hungry eyes pursued
 His portly presence mad for food,
 With dark hints muttered under breath
 Of casting lots for life or death,
 Offered, if Heaven withheld supplies,
 To be himself the sacrifice.
 Then, suddenly, as if to save
 The good man from his living grave,
 A ripple on the water grew,
 A school of porpoise flashed in view
 "Take, eat," he said, "and be content;
 These fishes in my stead are sent
 By Him who gave the tangled ram
 To spare the child of Abraham" ⁵⁵

Our uncle,⁵⁶ innocent of books,
 Was rich in lore of fields and brooks,
 The ancient teachers never dumb
 Of Nature's unhoused lyceum
 In moons and tides and weather wise,
 He reads the clouds as prophecies,
 And foul or fair could well divine,
 By many an occult hint and sign,
 Holding the cunning-warded keys
 To all the woodcraft mysteries;
 Himself to Nature's heart so near
 That all her voices in his ear
 Of beast or bird had meanings clear,

⁵³ William Sewel's *History of the Quakers*, a painstaking work ("painful").

⁵⁴ Thomas Chalkley was an itinerant Quaker preacher, whose account corroborates Mrs. Whittier's memory.

⁵⁵ Genesis xxiii.13

⁵⁶ Moses Whittier, younger brother of the poet's father, who never married and lived with John until his death in 1824.

Like Apollonius of old,⁵⁷ 320
 Who knew the tales the sparrows told,
 Or Hermes,⁵⁸ who interpreted
 What the sage cranes of Nilus ⁵⁹ said,
 A simple, guileless, childlike man,
 Content to live where life began,
 Strong only on his native grounds,
 The little world of sights and sounds
 Whose girdle was the parish bounds,
 Whereof his fondly partial pride
 The common features magnified, 330
 As Surrey hills to mountains grew
 In White of Selborne's ⁶⁰ loving view,—
 He told how teal and loon he shot,
 And how the eagle's eggs he got,
 The feats on pond and river done,
 The prodigies of rod and gun,
 Till, warming with the tales he told,
 Forgotten was the outside cold,
 The bitter wind unheeded blew,
 From ripening corn the pigeons flew, 340
 The partridge drummed i' the wood, the mink
 Went fishing down the river-brink
 In fields with bean or clover gay,
 The woodchuck, like a hermit gray,
 Peered from the doorway of his cell,
 The muskrat plied the mason's trade,
 And tier by tier his mud-walls laid,
 And from the shagbark overhead
 The grizzled squirrel dropped his shell.

Next, the dear aunt,⁶¹ whose smile of cheer 350
 And voice in dreams I see and hear,—
 The sweetest woman ever Fate
 Perverse denied a household mate,
 Who, lonely, homeless, not the less
 Found peace in love's unselfishness,
 And welcome wheresoe'er she went,
 A calm and gracious element,
 Whose presence seemed the sweet income
 And womanly atmosphere of home,—
 Called up her girlhood memories, 360
 The huskings and the apple-bees,
 The sleigh-rides and the summer sails,

⁵⁷ Probably the Pythagorean philosopher (c. 4 B.C.—A.D. 97).

⁵⁸ Hermes Trismegistus, alleged author of works on Egypt.

⁵⁹ The Nile

⁶⁰ Gilbert White, *Natural History of Selborne*, 1789. Surrey is in England

⁶¹ Mercy Evans Hussey, died 1846.

Weaving through all the poor details
 And homespun warp of circumstance
 A golden woof-thread of romance.
 For well she kept her genial mood
 And simple faith of maidenhood;
 Before her still a cloud-land lay,
 The mirage loomed across her way;
 The morning dew, that dries so soon
 370 With others, glistened at her noon;
 Through years of toil and soil and care,
 From glossy tress to thin gray hair,
 All unprofaned she held apart
 The virgin fancies of the heart.
 Be shame to him of woman born
 Who hath for such but thought of scorn.

There, too, our elder sister ⁶² plied
 Her evening task the stand beside;
 A full, rich nature, free to trust,
 380 Truthful and almost sternly just,
 Impulsive, earnest, prompt to act,
 And make her generous thought a fact,
 Keeping with many a light disguise
 The secret of self-sacrifice.
 O heart sore-tried! thou hast the best
 That Heaven itself could give thee,—rest,
 Rest from all bitter thoughts and things!
 How many a poor one's blessing went
 With thee beneath the low green tent
 390 Whose curtain never outward swings!

As one who held herself a part
 Of all she saw, and let her heart
 Against the household bosom lean,
 Upon the motley-braided mat
 Our youngest and our dearest ⁶³ sat,
 Lifting her large, sweet, asking eyes,
 Now bathed in the unfading green
 And holy peace of Paradise.
 Oh, looking from some heavenly hill,
 400 Or from the shade of saintly palms,
 Or silver reach of river calms,
 Do those large eyes behold me still?
 With me one little year ago:—
 The chill weight of the winter snow
 For months upon her grave has lain;
 And now, when summer south-winds blow
 And brier and harebell bloom again,

⁶² Mary Whittier Caldwell (1806–60).

⁶³ Elizabeth Hussey Whittier (1815–64).

I tread the pleasant paths we trod,
 I see the violet-sprinkled sod
 410 Whereon she leaned, too frail and weak
 The hillside flowers she loved to seek,
 Yet following me where'er I went
 With dark eyes full of love's content.
 The birds are glad; the brier-rose fills
 The air with sweetness; all the hills
 370 Stretch green to June's unclouded sky;
 But still I wait with ear and eye
 For something gone which should be nigh,
 A loss in all familiar things,
 420 In flower that blooms, and bird that sings.
 And yet, dear heart! remembering thee,
 Am I not richer than of old?
 Safe in thy immortality,
 What change can reach the wealth I hold?
 What chance can mar the pearl and gold
 380 Thy love hath left in trust with me?
 And while in life's late afternoon,
 Where cool and long the shadows grow,
 I walk to meet the night that soon
 430 Shall shape and shadow overflow,
 I cannot feel that thou art far,
 Since near at need the angels are;
 And when the sunset gates unbar,
 Shall I not see thee waiting stand,
 390 And, white against the evening star,
 The welcome of thy beckoning hand?

Brisk wielder of the birch and rule,⁶⁴
 The master of the district school
 Held at the fire his favored place,
 440 Its warm glow lit a laughing face
 Fresh-hued and fair, where scarce appeared
 The uncertain prophecy of beard.
 He teased the mitten-blinded cat,
 Played cross-pins on my uncle's hat,
 Sang songs, and told us what befalls
 400 In classic Dartmouth's college halls.
 Born the wild Northern hills among,
 From whence his yeoman father wrung
 By patient toil subsistence scant,
 450 Not competence and yet not want,
 He early gained the power to pay
 His cheerful, self-reliant way;
 Could doff at ease his scholar's gown
 To peddle wares from town to town;

⁶⁴ George Haskell (1799–1876), graduate of Dartmouth.

Or through the long vacation's reach
 In lonely lowland districts teach,
 Where all the droll experience found
 At stranger hearths in boarding round,
 The moonlit skater's keen delight,
 The sleigh-drive through the frosty night,
 The rustic party, with its rough
 Accompaniment of blind-man's-buff,
 And whirling-plate, and forfeits paid,
 His winter task a pastime made.
 Happy the snow-locked homes wherein
 He tuned his merry violin,
 Or played the athlete in the barn,
 Or held the good dame's winding-yarn,
 Or mirth-provoking versions told
 Of classic legends rare and old,
 Wherein the scenes of Greece and Rome
 Had all the commonplace of home,
 And little seemed at best the odds
 'Twixt Yankee pedlers and old gods;
 Where Pindus-born Arachthus⁶⁵ took
 The guise of any grist-mill brook,
 And dread Olympus⁶⁶ at his will
 Became a huckleberry hill.

A careless boy that night he seemed,
 But at his desk he had the look
 And air of one who wisely schemed,
 And hostage from the future took
 In trained thought and lore of book
 Large-brained, clear-eyed, of such as he
 Shall Freedom's young apostles be,
 Who, following in War's bloody trail,
 Shall every lingering wrong assail,
 All chains from limb and spirit strike,
 Uplift the black and white alike,
 Scatter before their swift advance
 The darkness and the ignorance,
 The pride, the lust, the squalid sloth,
 Which nurtured Treason's monstrous growth,
 Made murder pastime, and the hell
 Of prison-torture possible,
 The cruel lie of caste refute,
 Old forms remould, and substitute
 For Slavery's lash the freeman's will,
 For blind routine, wise-handed skill,
 A school-house plant on every hill,

⁶⁵ River in Greece, rising in Pindus mountains

⁶⁶ Mythical abode of the Greek gods

Stretching in radiate nerve-lines thence
 The quick wires of intelligence,
 Till North and South together brought
 Shall own the same electric thought,
 In peace a common flag salute,
 And, side by side in labor's free
 And unresentful rivalry,
 Harvest the fields wherein they fought

Another guest⁶⁷ that winter night
 Flashed back from lustrous eyes the light
 Unmarked by time, and yet not young,
 The honeyed music of her tongue
 And words of meekness scarcely told
 A nature passionate and bold,
 Strong, self-concentred, spurning guide,
 Its milder features dwarfed beside
 Her unbent will's majestic pride
 She sat among us, at the best,
 A not unfear'd, half-welcome guest,
 Rebuking with her cultured phrase
 Our homeliness of words and ways.

A certain pard-like, treacherous grace
 Swayed the lithe limbs and drooped the lash,
 Lent the white teeth their dazzling flash,
 And under low brows, black with night,
 Rayed out at times a dangerous light;
 The sharp heat-lightnings of her face
 Presaging ill to him whom Fate
 Condemned to share her love or hate.

A woman tropical, intense
 In thought and act, in soul and sense,
 She blended in a like degree
 The vixen and the devotee,
 Revealing with each freak or feint
 The temper of Petruchio's Kate,⁶⁸
 The raptures of Siena's saint.⁶⁹
 Her tapering hand and rounded wrist
 Had facile power to form a fist;
 The warm, dark languish of her eyes
 Was never safe from wrath's surprise.
 Brows saintly calm and lips devout
 Knew every change of scowl and pout,
 And the sweet voice had notes more high
 And shrill for social battle-cry

⁶⁷ Harriet Livermore (1788-1867). See Whittier's introduction to the poem

⁶⁸ Heroine of *Taming of the Shrew*

⁶⁹ St. Catherine of Siena (1347-80), famous for mildness and charity

Since then what old cathedral town
 Has missed her pilgrim staff and gown,
 What convent-gate has held its lock
 Against the challenge of her knock!
 Through Smyrna's plague-hushed thoroughfares, 550
 Up sea-set Malta's rocky stairs,
 Gray olive slopes of hills that hem
 Thy tombs and shrines, Jerusalem,
 Or startling on her desert throne
 The crazy Queen of Lebanon ⁷⁰
 With claims fantastic as her own,
 Her tireless feet have held their way;
 And still, unrestful, bowed, and gray,
 She watches under Eastern skies,
 With hope each day renewed and fresh, 560
 The Lord's quick coming in the flesh,
 Whercof she dreams and prophecies!

Where'er her troubled path may be,
 The Lord's sweet pity with her go!
 The outward wayward life we see,
 The hidden springs we may not know.
 Nor is it given us to discern
 What threads the fatal sisters ⁷¹ spun,
 Through what ancestral years has run
 The sorrow with the woman born, 570
 What forged her cruel chain of moods,
 What set her feet in solitudes,
 And held the love within her mute,
 What mingled madness in the blood,
 A life-long discord and annoy,
 Water of tears with oil of joy,
 And hid within the folded bud
 Perversities of flower and fruit.
 It is not ours to separate
 The tangled skein of will and fate, 580
 To show what metes and bounds should stand
 Upon the soul's debatable land,
 And between choice and Providence
 Divide the circle of events;
 But He who knows our frame is just,
 Merciful and compassionate,
 And full of sweet assurances
 And hope for all the language is,
 That He remembereth we are dust!

At last the great logs, crumbling low,
 Sent out a dull and duller glow,
 The bull's-eye watch that hung in view,
 Ticking its weary circuit through,
 Pointed with mutely warning sign
 Its black hand to the hour of nine.
 That sign the pleasant circle broke:
 My uncle ceased his pipe to smoke,
 Knocked from its bowl the refuse gray,
 And laid it tenderly away;
 Then roused himself to safely cover 600
 The dull red brands with ashes over.
 And while, with care, our mother laid
 The work aside, her steps she stayed
 One moment, seeking to express
 Her grateful sense of happiness
 For food and shelter, warmth and health,
 And love's contentment more than wealth,
 With simple wishes (not the weak,
 Vain prayers which no fulfilment seek,
 But such as warm the generous heart, 610
 O'er-prompt to do with Heaven its part)
 That none might lack, that bitter night,
 For bread and clothing, warmth and light.

Within our beds awhile we heard
 The wind that round the gables roared,
 With now and then a ruder shock,
 Which made our very bedsteads rock.
 We heard the loosened clapboards tost,
 The board-nails snapping in the frost;
 And on us, through the unplastered wall, 620
 Felt the light sifted snow-flakes fall.
 But sleep stole on, as sleep will do
 When hearts are light and life is new;
 Faint and more faint the murmurs grew,
 Till in the summer-land of dreams
 They softened to the sound of streams,
 Low stir of leaves, and dip of oars,
 And lapsing waves on quiet shores.

Next morn we wakened with the shout
 Of merry voices high and clear; 630
 And saw the teamsters drawing near
 To break the drifted highways out.
 Down the long hillside treading slow
 We saw the half-buried oxen go,
 Shaking the snow from heads uptost,
 Their straining nostrils white with frost.

⁷⁰ Religious eccentric, Lady Hester Stanhope. See Kinglake's *Eothen*, chap. VIII.

⁷¹ The three Fates in Greek mythology who control the span of life.

Before our door the straggling train
 Drew up, an added team to gain
 The elders threshed their hands a-cold,
 Passed, with the cider-mug, then jokes
 From lip to lip, the younger folks
 Down the loose snow-banks, wrestling, rolled,
 Then toiled again the cavalcade
 O'er windy hill, through clogged ravine,
 And woodland paths that wound between
 Low drooping pine-boughs winter-weighed
 From every barn a team afoot,
 At every house a new recruit,
 Where, drawn by Nature's subtlest law,
 Haply the watchful young men saw
 Sweet doorway pictures of the curls
 And curious eyes of merry girls,
 Lifting their hands in mock defence
 Against the snow-ball's compliments,
 And reading in each missive tost
 The charm with Eden never lost.

We heard once more the sleigh-bells' sound,
 And, following where the teamsters led,
 The wise old Doctor ⁷² went his round,
 Just pausing at our door to say,
 In the brief autocratic way
 Of one who, prompt at Duty's call,
 Was free to urge her claim on all,
 That some poor neighbor sick abed
 At night our mother's aid would need
 For, one in generous thought and deed,
 What mattered in the sufferer's sight
 The Quaker matron's inward light,
 The Doctor's mail of Calvin's creed?
 All hearts confess the saints elect
 Who, twain in faith, in love agree,
 And melt not in an acid sect
 The Christian pearl of charity!

So days went on a week had passed
 Since the great world was heard from last
 The Almanac we studied o'er,
 Read and reread our little store
 Of books and pamphlets, scarce a score;
 One harmless novel, mostly hid
 From younger eyes, a book forbid,
 And poetry, (or good or bad,
 A single book was all we had,)

⁷² Dr. Elias Weld of Rocks Village

Where Ellwood's ⁷³ meek, drab-skirted Muse,
 A stranger to the heathen Nine,
 Sang, with a somewhat nasal whine,
 640 The wars of David and the Jews
 At last the floundering carrier bore
 The village paper ⁷⁴ to our door
 Lo! broadening outward as we read,
 To wimmer zones the horizon spread 690
 In panoramic length unrolled
 We saw the marvels that it told
 Before us passed the painted Creeks,
 And daft McGregor ⁷⁵ on his raids
 In Costa Rica's everglades
 650 And up Taygetos winding slow
 Rode Ypsilanti's Mainote Greeks,⁷⁶
 A Turk's head at each saddle-bow!
 Welcome to us its week-old news,
 Its corner for the rustic Muse, 700
 Its monthly gauge of snow and rain,
 Its record, mingling in a breath
 The wedding bell and dirge of death
 Jest, anecdote, and love-loin tale,
 The latest culprit sent to jail,
 Its hue and cry of stolen and lost,
 660 Its vendue sales and goods at cost,
 And traffic calling loud for gam
 We felt the stir of hall and street,
 The pulse of life that round us beat; 710
 The chill embargo of the snow
 Was melted in the genial glow,
 Wide swung again our ice-locked door,
 And all the world was ours once more!

Clasp, Angel of the backward look
 670 And folded wings of ashen gray
 And voice of echoes far away,
 The brazen covers of thy book;
 The weird palimpsest old and vast,
 Wherein thou hid'st the spectral past, 720
 Where, closely mingling, pale and glow
 The characters of joy and woe;
 The monographs of outlived years,
 Or smile-illumined or dim with tears,
 Green hills of life that slope to death,

⁷³ Thomas Ellwood (1639-1713), author of *Davideis*, 1712.
⁷⁴ Events alluded to took place in Whittier's early youth—about 1820

⁷⁵ Gregor McGregor tried by force to establish a colony in Costa Rica in 1819

⁷⁶ General Ypsilanti, leader of Greek insurrection against Turkish rule

And haunts of home, whose vistaed trees
Shade off to mournful cypresses
With the white amaranths ⁷⁷ underneath.
Even while I look, I can but heed

The restless sands' incessant fall,
Importunate hours that hours succeed,
Each clamorous with its own sharp need,
And duty keeping pace with all.

Shut down and claps the heavy lids;
I hear again the voice that bids
The dreamer leave his dream midway
For larger hopes and graver fears:
Life greatens in these later years,
The century's aloe ⁷⁸ flowers to-day!

Yet, haply, in some lull of life,
Some Truce of God which breaks its strife,
The worldling's eyes shall gather dew,

730

740

Dreaming in throngful city ways
Of winter joys his boyhood knew;
And dear and early friends—the few
Who yet remain—shall pause to view
These Flemish ⁷⁹ pictures of old days;
Sit with me by the homestead hearth,
And stretch the hands of memory forth
To warm them at the wood-fire's blaze!
And thanks untraced to lips unknown
Shall greet me like the odors blown
From unseen meadows newly mown,
Or lilies floating in some pond,
Wood-fringed, the wayside gaze beyond;
The traveller owns the grateful sense
Of sweetness near, he knows not whence,
And, pausing, takes with forehead bare
The benediction of the air.

750

1865

1865

Disarmament

"Put up the sword!" The voice of Christ once
more

Speaks, in the pauses of the cannon's roar,
O'er fields of corn by fiery sickles reaped
And left dry ashes; over trenches heaped
With nameless dead; o'er cities starving slow
Under a rain of fire; through wards of woe
Down which a groaning diapason runs
From tortured brothers, husbands, lovers, sons
Of desolate women in their far-off homes,
Waiting to hear the step that never comes!
O men and brothers! let that voice be heard.
War fails, try peace; put up the useless sword!

10

Fear not the end. There is a story told
In Eastern tents, when autumn nights grow cold,
And round the fire the Mongol shepherds sit
With grave responses listening unto it:
Once, on the errands of his mercy bent,
Buddha, the holy and benevolent,
Met a fell monster, huge and fierce of look,

⁷⁷ Imaginary unfading flower.

⁷⁸ Century plant popularly thought to bloom only once in a century. The abolition of slavery would be an appropriate bloom for America's century of independence.

Whose awful voice the hills and forests shook.
"O son of peace!" the giant cried, "thy fate
Is sealed at last, and love shall yield to hate."
The unarmed Buddha looking, with no trace
Of fear or anger, in the monster's face,
In pity said: "Poor fiend, even thee I love."
Lo! as he spake the sky-tall terror sank
To hand-breadth size; the huge abhorrence shrank
Into the form and fashion of a dove;
And where the thunder of its rage was heard,
Circling above him sweetly sang the bird:
"Hate hath no harm for love," so ran the song;
"And peace unweaponed conquers every wrong!"

20

30

1871

John Underhill ⁸⁰

A score of years had come and gone
Since the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth stone,
When Captain Underhill, bearing scars
From Indian ambush and Flemish wars,
Left three-hilled Boston and wandered down,
East by north, to Cocheco town.

⁷⁹ Flemish painters noted for homely realism.

⁸⁰ English military leader (1597?–1672), helped destroy Pequot Indians and aided British to get control of New Amsterdam. He was banished from Massachusetts because of religious views.

With Vane ⁸¹ the younger, in council sweet,
 He had sat at Anna Hutchinson's ⁸² feet,
 And, when the bolt of banishment fell
 On the head of his saintly oracle,
 He had shared her ill as her good report,
 And braved the wrath of the General Court.

He shook from his feet as he rode away
 The dust of the Massachusetts Bay,⁸³
 The world might bless and the world might ban,
 What did it matter the perfect man,
 To whom the freedom of earth was given,
 Proof against sin, and sure of heaven?

He cheered his heart as he rode along
 With screed of Scripture and holy song,
 Or thought how he rode with his lances free
 By the Lower Rhine and the Zuyder-Zee,
 Till his wood-path grew to a trodden road,
 And Hilton Point in the distance showed

He saw the church with the block-house nigh,
 The two fair rivers, the flakes thereby,
 And, tacking to windward, low and crank,
 The little shallop from Strawberry Bank,
 And he rose in his stirrups and looked abroad
 Over land and water, and praised the Lord.

Goodly and stately and grave to see,
 Into the clearing's space rode he,
 With the sun on the hilt of his sword in sheath,
 And his silver buckles and spurs beneath,
 And the settlers welcomed him, one and all,
 From swift Quampeagan to Conic Fall

And he said to the elders "Lo, I come
 As the way seemed open to seek a home
 Somewhat the Lord hath wrought by my hands
 In the Narragansett and Netherlands,
 And if here ye have work for a Christian man,
 I will tarry, and serve ye as best I can

"I boast not of gifts, but fain would own
 The wonderful favor God hath shown,
 The special mercy vouchsafed one day
 On the shore of Narragansett Bay,
 As I sat, with my pipe, from the camp aside,
 And mused like Isaac at eventide ⁸⁴

⁸¹ Sir Henry Vane (1613-62).

⁸² Religious liberal (1591-1643), settled near Boston (1634), banished from Colony (1637), emigrated to Rhode Island, and killed by Indians near Pelham Bay, N. Y.

⁸³ Cf. Matthew x 14; Mark vi 11, Luke ix 5, Acts xiii 51.

"A sudden sweetness of peace I found,
 A garment of gladness wrapped me round,
 I felt from the law of works released,
 The strife of the flesh and spirit ceased,
 My faith to a full assurance grew,
 And all I had hoped for myself I knew

50

"Now, as God appointeth, I keep my way,
 I shall not stumble, I shall not stray,⁸⁵
 He hath taken away my fig-leaf dress,⁸⁶
 I wear the robe of His righteousness,⁸⁷
 And the shafts of Satan no more avail
 Than Pequot arrows on Christian mail "

60

"Tarry with us," the settlers cried,
 "Thou man of God, as our ruler and guide "
 And Captain Underhill bowed his head
 "The will of the Lord be done!" he said
 And the morrow beheld him sitting down
 In the ruler's seat in Cocheco town

And he judged therein as a just man should,
 His words were wise and his rule was good,
 He coveted not his neighbor's land,⁸⁸
 From the holding of bribes he shook his hand,⁸⁹
 And through the camps of the heathen ran
 A wholesome fear of the valiant man.

70

But the heart is deceitful, the good Book saith,⁹⁰
 And life hath ever a savor of death
 Through hymns of triumph the tempter calls,
 And whoso thinketh he standeth falls ⁹¹
 Alas! ere their round the seasons ran,
 There was grief in the soul of the saintly man

The tempter's arrows that rarely fail
 Had found the joints of his spiritual mail,
 And men took note of his gloomy air,
 The shame in his eye, the halt in his prayer,
 The signs of a battle lost within,
 The pain of a soul in the coils of sin.

80

Then a whisper of scandal linked his name
 With broken vows and a life of blame;
 And the people looked askance on him
 As he walked among them sullen and grim,
 Ill at ease, and bitter of word,
 And prompt of quarrel with hand or sword.

90

⁸⁴ Cf. Genesis xxiv 63.

⁸⁵ Psalm xxiii 3.

⁸⁶ Genesis iii 7

⁸⁷ Job xxix 14

⁸⁸ Exodus xx 17.

⁸⁹ Isaiah xxxiii 15

⁹⁰ Jeremiah xvii 9

⁹¹ I Corinthians x 12.

None knew how, with prayer and fasting still,
He strove in the bonds of his evil will;
But he shook himself like Samson at length,⁹²
And girded anew his loins of strength,⁹³
And bade the crier go up and down
And call together the wondering town.

Jeer and murmur and shaking of head
Ceased as he rose in his place and said:
"Men, brethren, and fathers, well ye know
How I came among you a year ago,
Strong in the faith that my soul was freed
From sin of feeling, or thought, or deed.

"I have sinned, I own it with grief and shame,
But not with a lie on my lips I came.
In my blindness I verily thought my heart
Swept and garnished in every part.⁹⁴
He chargeth His angels with folly;⁹⁵ He sees
The heavens unclean.⁹⁶ Was I more than these?

"I urge no plea. At your feet I lay
The trust you gave me, and go my way.
Hate me or pity me, as you will,
The Lord will have mercy on sinners still;
And I, who am chiefest, say to all,
Watch and pray, lest ye also fall."⁹⁷

No voice made answer: a sob so low
That only his quickened ear could know
Smote his heart with a bitter pain,
As into the forest he rode again,
And the veil of its oaken leaves shut down
On his latest glimpse of Cocheco town.

Crystal-clear on the man of sin
The streams flashed up, and the sky shone in;
On his cheek of fever the cool wind blew,
The leaves dropped on him their tears of dew,
And angels of God, in the pure, sweet guise
Of flowers, looked on him with sad surprise.

Was his ear at fault that brook and breeze
Sang in their saddest of minor keys?
What was it the mournful wood-thrush said?
What whispered the pine-trees overhead?

Did he hear the Voice on his lonely way
That Adam heard in the cool of day?⁹⁸

Into the desert alone rode he,
Alone with the Infinite Purity;
And, bowing his soul to its tender rebuke,
As Peter did to the Master's look,⁹⁹
He measured his path with prayers of pain
For peace with God and nature again.

And in after years to Cocheco came
The bruit of a once familiar name;
How among the Dutch of New Netherlands,
From wild Danskamer to Haarlem sands,
A penitent soldier preached the Word,
And smote the heathen with Gideon's sword!¹⁰⁰

And the heart of Boston was glad to hear
How he harried the foe on the long frontier,
And heaped on the land against him barred
The coals of his generous watch and ward.
Frailest and bravest! the Bay State still
Counts with her worthies John Underhill.
1873

Rabbi Ishmael *

The Rabbi Ishmael, with the woe and sin
Of the world heavy upon him, entering in
The Holy of Holies, saw an awful Face
With terrible splendor filling all the place.
"O Ishmael Ben Elisha!" said a voice,
"What seekest thou? What blessing is thy
choice?"

And, knowing that he stood before the Lord,
Within the shadow of the cherubim,
Wide-winged between the blinding light and
him,

He bowed himself, and uttered not a word,
But in the silence of his soul was prayer:

* "Rabbi Ishmael Ben Elisha said, Once I entered into the Holy of Holies [as High Priest] to burn incense, when I saw Akriel [the Divine Crown] Jah, Lord of Hosts, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, who said unto me, 'Ishmael, my son, bless me.' I answered, 'May it please Thee to make Thy compassion prevail over Thine anger; may it be revealed above Thy other attributes; mayest Thou deal with Thy children according to it, and not according to the strict measure of judgment.' It seemed to me that He bowed His head, as though to answer Amen to my blessing." *Talmud* (Berachôth, i. f. 6 b.).

⁹² Judges xvi:20.

⁹³ Job xxxviii:3; xl:7.

⁹⁴ Luke xi:25.

⁹⁵ Job iv:18.

⁹⁶ Job xv:15.

⁹⁷ I Timothy i:15; Matthew xxvi:41.

⁹⁸ Genesis iii:8.

⁹⁹ Luke xxii:61-62.

¹⁰⁰ Judges vii:14.

"O Thou Eternal! I am one of all,
 And nothing ask that others may not share
 Thou art almighty, we are weak and small,
 And yet Thy children let Thy mercy spare!"
 Trembling, he raised his eyes, and in the place
 Of the insufferable glory, lo! a face
 Of more than mortal tenderness, that bent
 Graciously down in token of assent,
 And, smiling, vanished! With strange joy elate, 20
 The wondering Rabbi sought the temple's gate
 Radiant as Moses from the Mount,¹⁰¹ he stood
 And cried aloud unto the multitude
 "O Israel, hear! The Lord our God is good!
 Mine eyes have seen His glory and His grace,
 Beyond His judgments shall His love endure,
 The mercy of the All Merciful is sure!"

1881

O. W. Holmes on His Eightieth Birthday

Climbing a path which leads back never more
 We heard behind his footsteps and his cheer,
 Now, face to face, we greet him standing here
 Upon the lonely summit of Fourscore!

Welcome to us, o'er whom the lengthened day
 Is closing and the shadows colder grow,
 His genial presence, like an afterglow,
 Following the one just vanishing away
 Long be it ere the table shall be set
 For the last breakfast of the Autocrat, 10
 And love repeat with smiles and tears thereat
 His own sweet songs that time shall not forget
 Waiting with us the call to come up higher,
 Life is not less, the heavens are only higher!
 1889

James Russell Lowell

From purest wells of English undefiled
 None deeper drank than he, the New World's
 child,
 Who in the language of their farm-fields spoke
 The wit and wisdom of New England folk,
 Shaming a monstrous wrong The world-wide
 laugh
 Provoked thereby might well have shaken half
 The walls of Slavery down, ere yet the ball
 And mine of battle overthrew them all

1891

The Lighting Up¹⁰²

He spak to the spynnsters to spynnen it oute
Pier's Ploughman

This evening, the 20th of the ninth month, is the
 time fixed upon for lighting the mills for night-labor,
 and I have just returned from witnessing for the first
 time the effect of the new illumination.

Passing over the bridge, nearly to the Dracut shore,
 I had a fine view of the long line of mills, the city
 beyond, and the broad sweep of the river from the
 falls. The light of a tranquil and gorgeous sunset was 10
 slowly fading from river and sky, and the shadows
 of the trees on the Dracut slopes were blending in
 dusky indistinctness with the great shadow of night.
 Suddenly gleams of light broke from the black masses
 of masonry on the Lowell bank, at first feeble and
 scattered, flitting from window to window, appearing
 and disappearing, like will-o'-wispes in a forest or

fireflies in a summer's night. Anon tier after tier of
 windows became radiant, until the whole vast wall,
 stretching far up the river, from basement to roof,
 became checkered with light reflected with the star-
 beams from the still water beneath. With a little
 effort of fancy, one could readily transform the huge
 mills, thus illuminated, into palaces lighted up for
 festival occasions, and the figures of the workers,
 passing to and fro before the windows, into forms of
 beauty and fashion, moving in graceful dances.

Alas! this music of the shuttle and the daylong
 dance to it are not altogether of the kind which
 Milton speaks of when he invokes the "soft Lydian
 airs"¹⁰³ of voluptuous leisure. From this time hence-
 forward for half a weary year, from the bell-call of
 morning twilight to half-past seven in the evening,
 with brief intermissions for two hasty meals, the

Lowell (1845), *Literary Recreations and Miscellanies* (1854),
Writings (1888), vol. V
¹⁰³ *L'Allegro*, l. 123

¹⁰¹ Cf. Exodus xxiv 29-30

¹⁰² First published in *Middlesex Standard*, October 24, 1844,
 as "The Stranger in Lowell," reprinted in *The Stranger in*

operatives will be confined to their tasks. The proverbial facility of the Yankees in despatching their dinners in the least possible time seems to have been taken advantage of and reduced to a system on the Lowell corporations. Strange as it may seem to the uninitiated, the working-men and women here contrive to repair to their lodgings, make the necessary preliminary ablutions, devour their beef and pudding, and hurry back to their looms and jacks in the brief space of half an hour. In this way the working-day in Lowell is eked out to an average throughout the year of twelve and a half hours. This is a serious evil, demanding the earnest consideration of the humane and philanthropic. Both classes—the employer and the employed—would in the end be greatly benefited by the general adoption of the “ten-hour system,” although the one might suffer a slight diminution in daily wages and the other in yearly profits. Yet it is difficult to see how this most desirable change is to be effected. The stronger and healthier portion of the operatives might themselves object to it as strenuously as the distant stockholder who looks only to his semi-annual dividends. Health is too often a matter of secondary consideration. Gain is the great, all-absorbing object. Very few, comparatively, regard Lowell as their “continuing city.”¹⁰⁴ They look longingly back to green valleys of Vermont, to quiet farm-houses on the head-waters of the Connecticut and Merrimac, and to old familiar homes along the breezy seaboard of New England, whence they have been urged by the knowledge that here they can earn a larger amount of money in a given time than in any other place or employment. They come here for gain, not for pleasure; for high wages, not for the comforts that cluster about home. Here are poor widows toiling to educate their children; daughters hoarding their wages to redeem mortgaged paternal homesteads or to defray the expenses of sick and infirm parents; young betrothed girls, about to add their savings to those of their country lovers. Others there are, of maturer age, lonely and poor, impelled hither by a proud unwillingness to test to its extent the charity of friends and relatives, and a strong yearning for the “glorious privilege of being independent.” All honor to them! Whatever may have closed against them the gates of matrimony, whether their own obduracy or the faithlessness or indifference of others, instead of shutting

themselves up in a nunnery or taxing the good nature of their friends by perpetual demands for sympathy and support, like weak vines, putting out their feelers in every direction for something to twine upon, is it not better and wiser for them to go quietly at work, to show that woman has a self-sustaining power; that she is something in and of herself; that she, too, has a part to bear in life, and, in common with the self-elected “lords of creation,” has a direct relation to absolute being? To such the factory presents the opportunity of taking the first and essential step of securing, within a reasonable space of time, a comfortable competency.

There are undoubtedly many evils connected with the working of these mills; yet they are partly compensated by the fact that here, more than in any other mechanical employment, the labor of woman is placed essentially upon an equality with that of man. Here, at least, one of the many social disabilities under which woman as a distinct individual, unconnected with the other sex, has labored in all time, is removed; the work of her hands is adequately rewarded; and she goes to her daily task with the consciousness that she is not “spending her strength for naught.”

The *Lowell Offering*, which has been for the last four years published monthly in this city, consisting entirely of articles written by females employed in the mills, has attracted much attention and obtained a wide circulation. This may be in part owing to the novel circumstances of its publication; but it is something more and better than a mere novelty. In its volumes may be found sprightly delineations of home scenes and characters, highly-wrought imaginative pieces, tales of genuine pathos and humor, and pleasing fairy stories and fables. The *Offering* originated in a reading society of the mill girls, which, under the name of the Improvement Circle, was convened once in a month. At its meetings, pieces written by its members and dropped secretly into a sort of “lion’s mouth,” provided for the purpose of insuring the authors from detection, were read for the amusement and criticism of the company. This circle is still in existence; and I owe to my introduction to it some of the most pleasant hours I have passed in Lowell.

The manner in which the *Offering* has been generally noticed in this country has not, to my thinking, been altogether in accordance with good taste

¹⁰⁴ See Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews, xiii:14.

or self-respect It is hardly excusable for men, who, whatever may be their present position, have, in common with all of us, brothers, sisters, or other relations busy in workshop and dairy, and who have scarcely washed from their own professional hands the soil of labor, to make very marked demonstrations of astonishment at the appearance of a magazine whose papers are written by factory girls As if the compatibility of mental cultivation with bodily labor and the equality and brotherhood of the human family were still open questions, depending for their decision very much on the production of positive proof that essays may be written and carpets woven by the same set of fingers!

The truth is, our democracy lacks calmness and solidity, the repose and self-reliance which come of long habitude and settled conviction We have not yet learned to wear its simple truths with the graceful ease and quiet air of unsolicitous assurance with which the titled European does his social fictions As a people, we do not feel and live out our great Declaration We lack faith in man,—confidence in simple humanity, apart from its environments

The age shows, to my thinking, more infidels to Adam,
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God

Elizabeth B Browning

1844

Evangeline

A REVIEW OF MR LONGFELLOW'S POEM ¹⁰⁵

EUREKA! Here, then, we have it at last,—an American poem, with the lack of which British reviewers have so long reproached us Selecting the subject of all others best calculated for his purpose,—the expulsion of the French settlers of Acadie from their quiet and pleasant homes around the Basin of Minas, one of the most sadly romantic passages in the history of the Colonies of the North,—the author has succeeded in presenting a series of exquisite pictures of the striking and peculiar features of life and nature in the New World The range of these delineations extends from Nova Scotia on the northeast to the spurs of the Rocky Mountains on the west and the Gulf of Mexico on the south Nothing can be added to his pictures of quiet farm-life in Acadie, the Indian summer of our northern latitudes, the scenery of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, the bayous and cypress forests of the South, the mocking-bird, the prairie, the Ozark hills, the Catholic missions, and the wild Arabs of the West, roaming with the buffalo along the banks of the Nebraska The hexameter measure he has chosen has the advantage of a prosaic freedom of expression, exceedingly well adapted to a descriptive and narrative poem; yet we are constrained to think that the story of *Evangeline* would have been quite as acceptable to the public taste had it been told in the poetic prose of the author's Hyperion.

In reading it and admiring its strange melody we were not without fears that the success of Professor Longfellow in this novel experiment might prove the occasion of calling out a host of awkward imitators, leading us over weary wastes of hexameters, enlivened neither by dew, rain, nor fields of offering

Apart from its Americanism, the poem has merits of a higher and universal character It is not merely a work of art, the pulse of humanity throbs warmly through it The portraits of Basil the blacksmith, the old notary, Benedict Bellefontaine, and good Father Felician, fairly glow with life The beautiful *Evangeline*, loving and faithful unto death, is a heroine worthy of any poet of the present century.

The editor of the *Boston Chronotype*, in the course of an appreciate review of this poem, urges with some force a single objection, which we are induced to notice, as it is one not unlikely to present itself to the minds of other readers:—

"We think Mr Longfellow ought to have expressed a much deeper indignation at the base, knavish, and heartless conduct of the English and Colonial persecutors than he has done. He should have put far bolder and deeper tints in the picture of suffering One great, if not the greatest, end of poetry is rhadamanthine ¹⁰⁶ justice The poet should mete out their deserts to all his heroes, honor to whom honor, and infamy to whom infamy, is due.

¹⁰⁵ Published in the *National Era*, November 25, 1847, January 27, 1848 Reprinted in *Literary Recreations and Miscellanies* (1854) and *Writings* (1888), vol VII.

¹⁰⁶ Rhadamanthus, in Greek mythology a judge in the lower world.

"It is true that the wrong in this case is in a great degree fathered upon our own Massachusetts; and it may be said that it is a foul bird that pollutes its own nest. We deny the applicability of the rather musty proverb. All the worse. Of not a more contemptible vice is what is called American literature guilty than this of unmitigated self-laudation. If we persevere in it, the stock will become altogether too small for the business. It seems that no period of our history has been exempt from materials for patriotic humiliation and national self-reproach; and surely the present epoch is laying in a large store of that sort. Had our poets always told us the truth of ourselves, perhaps it would now be otherwise. National self-flattery and concealment of faults must of course have their natural results."

We must confess that we read the first part of *Evangeline* with something of the feeling so forcibly expressed by Professor Wright. The natural and honest indignation with which, many years ago, we read for the first time that dark page of our Colonial history,—the expulsion of the French neutrals,—was reawakened by the simple pathos of the poem; and we longed to find an adequate expression of it in the burning language of the poet. We marvelled that he who could so touch the heart by his description of the sad suffering of the Acadian peasants should have permitted the authors of that suffering to escape without censure. The outburst of the stout Basil, in the church of Grand Pre, was, we are fain to acknowledge, a great relief to us. But, before reaching the close of the volume, we were quite reconciled to the author's forbearance. The design of the poem is manifestly incompatible with stern "rhadamantine justice" and indignant denunciation of wrong. It is a simple story of quiet pastoral happiness, of great sorrow and painful bereavement, and of the endurance of a love which, hoping and seeking always, wanders evermore up and down the wilderness of the world, baffled at every turn, yet still retaining faith in God and in the object of its lifelong quest. It was no part of the writer's object to investigate the merits of the question at issue between the poor Acadians and their Puritan neighbors. Looking at the materials before him with the eye of an artist simply, he has arranged them to suit his idea of the beautiful and pathetic, leaving to some future historian the duty of sitting in judgment upon the actors in the atrocious outrage which furnished them. With this we

are content. The poem now has unity and sweetness which might have been destroyed by attempting to avenge the wrongs it so vividly depicts. It is a psalm of love and forgiveness: the gentleness and peace of Christian meekness and forbearance breathe through it. Not a word of censure is directly applied to the marauding workers of the mighty sorrow which it describes just as it would a calamity from the elements,—a visitation of God. The reader, however, cannot fail to award justice to the wrong-doers. The unresisting acquiescence of the Acadians only deepens his detestation of the cupidity and religious bigotry of their spoilers. Even in the language of the good Father Felician, beseeching his flock to submit to the strong hand which had been laid upon them, we see and feel the magnitude of the crime to be forgiven:—

Lo, where the crucified Christ from his cross is gazing upon
you!
See in those sorrowful eyes what meekness and holy compassion!
Hark! how those lips still repeat the prayer, O Father,
forgive them!
Let us repeat that prayer in the hour when the wicked
assail us;
Let us repeat it now, and say, O Father, forgive them!

How does this simple prayer of the Acadians contrast with the "deep damnation of their taking off!"

The true history of the Puritans of New England is yet to be written. Somewhere midway between the caricatures of the Church party and the self-laudations of their own writers the point may doubtless be found from whence an impartial estimate of their character may be formed. They had noble qualities: the firmness and energy which they displayed in the colonization of New England must always command admiration. We would not rob them, were it in our power to do so, of one jot or tittle of their rightful honor. But, with all the lights which we at present possess, we cannot allow their claim of saintship without some degree of qualification. How they seemed to their Dutch neighbors at New Netherlands, and their French ones at Nova Scotia, and to the poor Indians, hunted from their fisheries and game-grounds, we can very well conjecture. It may be safely taken for granted that their gospel claim to the inheritance of the earth was not a little questionable to the Catholic fleeing for his life from their

jurisdiction, to the banished Baptist¹⁰⁷ shaking off the dust of his feet against them, and to the martyred Quaker denouncing woe and judgment upon them from the steps of the gallows. Most of them were, beyond a doubt, pious and sincere, but we are constrained to believe that among them were those who wore the livery of heaven from purely selfish motives, in a community where church-membership was an indispensable requisite, the only *open sesame* before which the doors of honor and distinction swung wide to needy or ambitious aspirants. Mere adventurers, men of desperate fortunes, bankrupts in character and purse, contrived to make gain of godliness under the church and state government of New England, put on the austere exterior of sanctity, quoted Scripture, anathematized heretics, whipped Quakers, exterminated Indians, burned and spoiled the villages of their Catholic neighbors, and hewed down their graven images and "houses of Rimmon."¹⁰⁸ It is curious to observe how a fierce religious zeal against heathens and idolaters went hand in hand with the old Anglo-Saxon love of land and plunder. Every crusade undertaken against the Papists of the French colonies had its Puritan Peter the Hermit¹⁰⁹ to summon the saints to the wars of the Lord. At the siege of Louisburg, ten years before the onslaught upon the Acadian settlers, one minister marched with the Colonial troops, axe in hand, to hew down the images in the French churches; while another officiated in the double capacity of drummer and chaplain,—a "drum ecclesiastic," as Hudibras¹¹⁰ has it.

At the late celebration of the landing of the Pilgrims in New York, the orator of the day labored at great length to show that the charge of intolerance, as urged against the colonists of New England, is unfounded in fact. The banishment of the Catholics was very sagaciously passed over in silence, inasmuch as the Catholic Bishop of New York was one of the invited guests, and (hear it, shade of Cotton Mather!)⁴⁰ one of the regular toasts was a compliment to the Pope. The expulsion of Roger Williams was excused and partially justified; while the whipping, ear-cropping, tongue-boring, and hanging of the

Quakers was defended, as the only effectual method of dealing with such devil-driven heretics, as Mather calls them. The orator, in the new-born zeal of his amateur Puritanism, stigmatizes the persecuted class as "fanatics and ranters, foaming forth their mad opinions," compares them to the Mormons and the crazy followers of Mathias, and cites an instance of a poor enthusiast, named Eccles, who, far gone in the "tailor's melancholy," took it into his head that he must enter into a steeple-house pulpit and stitch breeches "in singing time,"—a circumstance, by the way, which took place in Old England,—as a justification of the atrocious laws of the Massachusetts Colony. We have not the slightest disposition to deny the fanaticism and folly of some few professed Quakers in that day, and had the Puritans treated them as the Pope did one of their number whom he found crazily holding forth in the church of St. Peter, and consigned them to the care of physicians as religious monomaniacs, no sane man could have blamed them. Every sect, in its origin, and especially in its time of persecution, has had its fanatics. The early Christians, if we may credit the admissions of their own writers or attach the slightest credence to the statements of pagan authors, were by no means exempt from reproach and scandal in this respect. Were the Puritans themselves the men to cast stones at the Quakers and Baptists? Had they not, in the view at least of the Established Church, turned all England upside down with their fanaticisms and extravagances of doctrine and conduct? How look they as depicted in the sermons of Dr. South,¹¹¹ in the sarcastic pages of Hudibras, and the coarse caricatures of the clerical wits of the times of the second Charles? With their own backs scored and their ears cropped for the crime of denying the divine authority of church and state in England, were they the men to whip Baptists and hang Quakers for doing the same thing in Massachusetts?

Of all that is noble and true in the Puritan character we are sincere admirers. The generous and self-denying apostleship of Eliot¹¹² is, of itself, a beautiful page in their history. The physical daring and hardihood with which, amidst the times of savage warfare, they laid the foundations of mighty states, and subdued the rugged soil, and made the wilder-

¹⁰⁷ Roger Williams (1603?-83), banished from Massachusetts, founded a colony in Rhode Island.

¹⁰⁸ An Assyro-Babylonian god of storms.

¹⁰⁹ Leading preacher and leader of first Crusade in 1096.

¹¹⁰ Character in Samuel Butler's satire against English puritans, 1663-78.

¹¹¹ Robert South (1634-1716), chaplain to Charles II.

¹¹² John Eliot (1604-90), "Apostle of the Indians," worked with Indians of Massachusetts, translated Bible and catechism into their language.

ness blossom; their steadfast adherence to their religious principles, even when the Restoration had made apostasy easy and profitable; and the vigilance and firmness with which, under all circumstances, they held fast their chartered liberties and extorted new rights and privileges from the reluctant home government,—justly entitle them to the grateful remembrance of a generation now reaping the fruits of their toils and sacrifices. But, in expressing our grati-

tude to the founders of New England, we should not forget what is due to truth and justice; nor, for the sake of vindicating them from the charge of that religious intolerance which, at the time, they shared with nearly all Christendom, undertake to defend, in the light of the nineteenth century, opinions and practices hostile to the benignant spirit of the gospel and subversive of the inherent rights of man.

1847-48

1854

The Little Iron Soldier;

OR, WHAT AMINADAB IVISON DREAMED ABOUT ¹¹³

Aminadab Ivison started up in his bed. The great ¹⁰ of place for Jones to furnish me with such a sample. clock at the head of the staircase, an old and respected heirloom of the family, struck one.

"Ah," said he, heaving up a great sigh from the depths of his inner man, "I've had a tried time of it."

"And so have I," said the wife. "Thee's been kicking and threshing about all night. I do wonder what ails thee."

And well she might; for her husband, a well-to-do, portly, middle-aged gentleman, being blessed with ²⁰ an easy conscience, a genial temper, and a comfortable digestion, was able to bear a great deal of sleep, and seldom varied a note in the gamut of his snore from one year's end to another.

"A very remarkable exercise," soliloquized Aminadab; "very."

"Dear me! what was it?" inquired his wife.

"It must have been a dream," said Aminadab.

"O, is that all?" returned the good woman. "I'm glad it's nothing worse. But what has thee been ³⁰ dreaming about?"

"It's the strangest thing, Hannah, that thee ever heard of," said Aminadab, settling himself slowly back into his bed. ["Thee recollects Jones sent me yesterday a sample of castings from the foundry. Well, I thought I opened the box and found in it a little iron man, in regimentals; with his sword by his side and a cocked hat on, looking very much like the picture in the transparency over neighbor O'Neal's oyster-cellar across the way. I thought it rather out ⁴⁰

as I should not feel easy to show it to my customers, on account of its warlike appearance. However, as the work was well done, I took the little image and set him up on the table, against the wall; and, sitting down opposite, I began to think over my business concerns, calculating how much they would increase in profit in case a tariff man should be chosen our ruler for the next four years. Thee knows I am not in favor of choosing men of blood and strife to bear rule in the land: but it nevertheless seems proper to consider all the circumstances in this case, and, as one or the other of the candidates of the two great parties must be chosen, to take *the least of two evils*. All at once I heard a smart, quick tapping on the table; and, looking up, there stood the little iron man close at my elbow, winking and chuckling. "That's right, Aminadab!" said he, clapping his little metal hands together, till he rang over like a bell, 'take the least of two evils.' His voice had a sharp, clear, jingling sound, like that of silver dollars falling into a till. It startled me so that I woke up, but finding it only a dream presently fell asleep again. Then I thought I was down in the Exchange, talking with neighbor Simkins about the election and the tariff. 'I want a change in the administration, but I can't vote for a military chieftain,' said neighbor Simkins, 'as I look upon it unbecoming a Christian people to elect men of blood for their rulers.' 'I don't know,' said I, 'what objection thee can have to a fighting man; for thee's no Friend, and hasn't any

¹¹³ Published in the *National Era* (Washington, D. C.), November 30, 1848, to oppose the election of Zachary Taylor to the presidency. His nomination split the Whig party, the "Con-

science" Whigs, who opposed the war with Mexico, voting against him. Reprinted in *Literary Recreations and Miscellanies* (1854) and *Prose Works* (1866).

conscientious scruples against military matters For my own part, I do not take much interest in politics, and never attended a caucus in my life, believing it best to keep very much in the quiet, and avoid, as far as possible, all letting and hindering things, but there may be cases where a military man may be voted for as a choice of evils, and as a means of promoting the prosperity of the country in business matters' 'What!' said neighbor Simkins, 'are you going to vote for a man whose whole life has been spent in killing people?' This vexed me a little, and I told him there was such a thing as carrying a good principle too far, and that he might live to be sorry that he had thrown away his vote, instead of using it discreetly 'Why, there's the iron business,' said I, but just then I heard a clatter beside me, and, looking round, there was the little iron soldier clapping his hands in great glee 'That's it, Aminadab!' said he, 'business first, conscience afterwards! Keep up the price of iron with peace if you can, but keep it up at any rate.' This waked me again in a good deal of trouble, but, remembering that it is said that 'dreams come of the multitude of business,'¹¹⁴ I once more composed myself to sleep "

"Well, what happened next?" asked his wife.

"Why, I thought I was in the meeting-house, sitting on the facing-scat¹¹⁵ as usual I tried hard to settle my mind down into a quiet and humble state, but somehow the cares of the world got uppermost, and, before I was well aware of it, I was far gone in a calculation of the chances of the election, and the probable rise in the price of iron in the event of the choice of a President favorable to a high tariff Rap, tap, went something on the floor. I opened my eyes, and there was the little image, red-hot, as if just out of the furnace, dancing, and chuckling, and clapping his hands. 'That's right, Aminadab!' said he; 'go on as you have begun, take care of yourself in this world, and I'll promise you you'll be taken care of in the next Peace and poverty, or war and money. It's a choice of evils at best, and here's Scripture to decide the matter. "Be not righteous overmuch" ' "¹¹⁶ Then the wicked-looking little image twisted his hot lips, and leered at me with his blazing eyes, and chuckled and laughed with a noise exactly as if a bag of dollars had been poured out upon the meeting-house floor

¹¹⁴ Cf. Ecclesiastes v 3.

¹¹⁵ Leaders sat facing the congregation, directly in front or at a right angle

¹¹⁶ Ecclesiastes vii 16

This waked me just now in such a fright I wish thee would tell me, Hannah, what thee can make of these three dreams?"

"It don't need a Daniel to interpret them,"¹¹⁷ answered Hannah "Thee's been thinking of voting for a wicked old soldier, because thee cares more for thy iron business than for thy testimony against wars and fightings I don't a bit wonder at thy seeing the iron soldier thee tells of, and if thee votes to-morrow for a man of blood, it wouldn't be strange if he should haunt thee all thy life "

Aminadab Ivison was silent, for his conscience spoke in the words of his wife He slept no more that night, and rose up in the morning a wiser and better man

When he went forth to his place of business he saw the crowds hurrying to and fro, there were banners flying across the streets, huge placards were on the walls, and he heard all about him the bustle of the great election

"Friend Ivison," said a red-faced lawyer, almost breathless with his hurry, "more money is needed in the second ward, our committees are doing a great work there What shall I put you down for? Fifty dollars? If we carry the election, your property will rise twenty per cent Let me see, you are in the iron business, I think?"

Aminadab thought of the little iron soldier of his dream, and excused himself Presently a bank director came tearing into his office

"Have you voted yet, Mr Ivison? It's time to get your vote in I wonder you should be in your office now No business has so much at stake in this election as yours."

"I don't think I should feel entirely easy to vote for the candidate," said Aminadab.

"Mr. Ivison," said the bank director, "I always took you to be a shrewd, sensible man, taking men and things as they are The candidate may not be all you could wish for; but when the question is between him and a worse man, the best you can do is to choose the least of the two evils."

"Just so the little iron man said," thought Aminadab. "'Get thee behind me, Satan!'"¹¹⁸ No, neighbor Discount," said he, "I've made up my mind. I see no warrant for choosing evil at all. I can't vote for that man."

¹¹⁷ Cf. Daniel i 17.

¹¹⁸ Mark viii 33

"Very well," said the director, starting to leave the room; "you can do as you please; but if we are defeated through the ill-timed scruples of yourself and others, and your business pinches in consequence, you needn't expect us to help men who won't help themselves. Good day, sir."

Aminadab sighed heavily, and his heart sank within him; but he thought of his dream, and remained steadfast. Presently he heard heavy steps and the tapping of a cane on the stairs; and as the door opened he saw the drab surtout of the worthy and much-esteemed friend who sat beside him at the head of the meeting.

"How's thee do, Aminadab?" said he. "Thee's voted, I suppose?"

"No, Jacob," said he; "I don't like the candidate. I can't see my way clear to vote for a warrior."

"Well, but thee doesn't vote for him because he is a warrior, Aminadab," argued the other; "thee votes for him as a tariff man and an encourager of home industry. I don't like his wars and fightings better than thee does; but I'm told he's an honest man, and that he disapproves of war in the abstract, although he has been brought up to the business. If thee feels tender about the matter, I don't like to urge thee; but it really seems to me thee had better vote. Times have been rather hard, thou knows; and if by voting

at this election we can make business matters easier, I don't see how we can justify ourselves in staying at home. Thou knows we have a command to be diligent in business¹¹⁹ as well as fervent in spirit, and that the Apostle accounted him who provided not for his own household worse than an infidel.¹²⁰ I think it important to maintain on all proper occasions our Gospel testimony against wars and fightings; but there is such a thing as going to extremes, thou knows, and becoming over-scrupulous, as I think thou art in this case. It is said, thou knows, in Ecclesiastes,¹²¹ 'Be not righteous overmuch: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?' "

"Ah," said Aminadab to himself, "that's what the little iron soldier said in meeting." So he was strengthened in his resolution, and the persuasions of his friend were lost upon him.

At night Aminadab sat by his parlor fire, comfortable alike in his inner and his outer man. "Well, Hannah," said he, "I've taken thy advice. I didn't vote for the good fighter to-day."

"I'm glad of it," said the good woman, "and I dare say thee feels the better for it."

Aminadab Ivison slept soundly that night, and saw no more of the little iron soldier.

1848

1854, 1892-93

*The Great Ipswich Fright*¹²²

*The Frere into the dark gazed forth;
The sounds went onward towards the north;
The murmur of tongues, the tramp and tread
Of a mighty army to battle led.*

BALLAD OF THE Cid

Life's tragedy and comedy are never far apart. The ludicrous and the sublime, the grotesque and the pathetic, jostle each other on the stage; the jester, with his cap and bells, struts alongside of the hero; the lord mayor's pageant loses itself in the mob around Punch and Judy; the pomp and circumstance of war become mirth-provoking in a militia muster; and the majesty of the law is ridiculous in the mock dignity of a justice's court. The laughing philosopher of old looked on one side of life and his weeping

contemporary on the other; but he who has an eye to both must often experience that contrariety of feeling which Sterne compares to "the contest in the moist eyelids of an April morning, whether to laugh or cry."

The circumstance we are about to relate may serve as an illustration of the way in which the woof of comedy interweaves with the warp of tragedy. It occurred in the early stages of the American Revolution, and is part and parcel of its history in the north-eastern section of Massachusetts.

About midway between Salem and the ancient town of Newburyport, the traveller on the Eastern Railroad sees on the right, between him and the sea, a tall church-spire, rising above a semicircle of brown

¹¹⁹ Cf. Proverbs xxii: 29.

¹²⁰ Cf. Timothy v:8.

¹²¹ Ecclesiastes vii:r6.

¹²² Published in *The National Era*, August 9, 1849. Reprinted in *Literary Recreations and Miscellanies* (1854) and *Writings* (1888), vol. VII.

roofs and venerable elms, to which a long scalloping range of hills, sweeping off to the seaside, forms a green background. This is Ipswich, the ancient Agawam, one of those steady, conservative villages, of which a few are still left in New England, wherein a contemporary of Cotton Mather and Governor Endicott, were he permitted to revisit the scenes of his painful probation, would scarcely feel himself a stranger. Law and Gospel, embodied in an orthodox steeple and a court-house, occupy the steep, rocky eminence in its midst, below runs the small river under its picturesque stone bridge, and beyond is the famous female seminary, where Andover theological students are wont to take unto themselves wives of the daughters of the Puritans. An air of comfort and quiet broods over the whole town. Yellow moss clings to the seaward sides of the roofs, one's eyes are not endangered by the intense glare of painted shingles and clapboards. The smoke of hospitable kitchens curls up through the overshadowing elms from huge-throated chimneys, whose hearth-stones have been worn by the feet of many generations. The tavern was once renowned throughout New England, and it is still a creditable hostelry. During court time it is crowded with jocose lawyers, anxious clients, sleepy jurors, and miscellaneous hangers on; disinterested gentlemen, who have no particular business of their own in court, but who regularly attend its sessions, weighing evidence, deciding upon the merits of a lawyer's plea or a judge's charge, getting up extempore trials upon the piazza or in the bar-room of cases still involved in the glorious uncertainty of the law in the court-house, proffering gratuitous legal advice to irascible plaintiffs and desponding defendants, and in various other ways seeing that the Commonwealth receives no detriment. In the autumn old sportsmen make the tavern their head-quarters while scouring the marshes for sea-birds, and slim young gentlemen from the city return thither with empty game-bags, as guiltless in respect to the snipes and wagtails as Winkle was in the matter of the rooks, after his shooting excursion at Dingle Dell. Twice, nay, three times a year, since third parties have been in fashion, the delegates of the political churches assemble in Ipswich to pass patriotic resolutions, and designate the candidates whom the good people of Essex County, with implicit faith in the wisdom of the selection, are expected to vote for. For the rest there are pleasant walks and drives around the picturesque village.

The people are noted for their hospitality, in summer the sea-wind blows cool over its healthy hills, and, take it for all in all, there is not a better preserved or pleasanter specimen of a Puritan town remaining in the ancient Commonwealth.

The 21st of April, 1775, witnessed an awful commotion in the little village of Ipswich. Old men, and boys, (the middle-aged had marched to Lexington some days before,) and all the women in the place who were not bedridden or sick, came rushing as with one accord to the green in front of the meeting-house. A rumor, which no one attempted to trace or authenticate, spread from lip to lip that the British regulars had landed on the coast and were marching upon the town. A scene of indescribable terror and confusion followed. Defence was out of the question, as the young and able-bodied men of the entire region round about had marched to Cambridge and Lexington. The news of the battle at the latter place, exaggerated in all its details, had been just received; terrible stories of the atrocities committed by the dreaded "regulars" had been related; and it was believed that nothing short of a general extermination of the patriots—men, women, and children—was contemplated by the British commander. Almost simultaneously the people of Beverly, a village a few miles distant, were smitten with the same terror. How the rumor was communicated no one could tell. It was there believed that the enemy had fallen upon Ipswich, and massacred the inhabitants without regard to age or sex.

It was about the middle of the afternoon of this day that the people of Newbury, ten miles farther north, assembled in an informal meeting at the town-house to hear accounts from the Lexington fight, and to consider what action was necessary in consequence of that event. Parson Carey was about opening the meeting with prayer when hurried hoof-beats sounded up the street, and a messenger, loose-haired and panting for breath, rushed up the staircase. "Turn out, turn out, for God's sake," he cried, "or you will be all killed! The regulars are marching on us, they are at Ipswich now, cutting and slashing all before them!" Universal consternation was the immediate result of this fearful announcement, Parson Carey's prayer died on his lips, the congregation dispersed over the town, carrying to every house the tidings that the regulars had come. Men on horseback went galloping up and down the streets, shouting the alarm. Women

and children echoed it from every corner. The panic became irresistible, uncontrollable. Cries were heard that the dreaded invaders had reached Oldtown Bridge, a little distance from the village, and that they were killing all whom they encountered. Flight was resolved upon. All the horses and vehicles in the town were put in requisition; men, women, and children hurried as for life towards the north. Some threw their silver and pewter ware and other valuable into wells. Large numbers crossed the Merrimac, 10 and spent the night in the deserted houses of Salisbury, whose inhabitants, stricken by the strange terror, had fled into New Hampshire, to take up their lodgings in dwellings also abandoned by their owners. A few individuals refused to fly with the multitude; some, unable to move by reason of sickness, were left behind by their relatives. One old gentleman, whose excessive corpulence rendered retreat on his part impossible, made a virtue of necessity; and, seating himself in his door-way with his loaded king's arm, up- 20 braided his more nimble neighbors, advising them to do as he did, and "stop and shoot the devils." Many ludicrous instances of the intensity of the terror might be related. One man got his family into a boat to go to Ram Island for safety. He imagined he was pursued by the enemy through the dusk of the evening, and was annoyed by the crying of an infant in the after part of the boat. "Do throw that squalling brat overboard," he called to his wife, "or we shall be all discovered and killed!" A poor woman ran four 30 or five miles up the river and stopped to take breath and nurse her child, when she found to her great horror that she had brought off the cat instead of the baby!

All through that memorable night the terror swept onward towards the north with a speed which seems almost miraculous, producing everywhere the same results. At midnight a horseman, clad only in shirt and breeches, dashed by our grandfather's door, in Haverhill, twenty miles up the river. "Turn out! Get a musket! Turn out!" he shouted; "the regulars are landing on Plum Island!" "I'm glad of it," responded the old gentleman from his chamber window; "I wish they were all there, and obliged to stay there." When it is understood that Plum Island is little more than a naked sand-ridge, the benevolence of this wish can be readily appreciated.

All the boats on the river were constantly employed for several hours in conveying across the terri-

fied fugitives. Through "the dead waste and middle of the night" they fled over the border into New Hampshire. Some feared to take the frequented roads, and wandered over wooded hills and through swamps where the snows of the late winter had scarcely melted. They heard the tramp and outcry of those behind them, and fancied that the sounds were made by pursuing enemies. Fast as they fled, the terror, by some unaccountable means, outstripped them. They found houses deserted and streets strewn with household stuffs, abandoned in the hurry of escape. Towards morning, however, the tide partially turned. Grown men began to feel ashamed of their fears. The old Anglo-Saxon hardihood paused and looked the terror in its face. Single or in small parties, armed with such weapons as they found at hand,—among which long poles, sharpened and charred at the end, were conspicuous,—they began to retrace their steps. In the mean time such of the good people of Ipswich as were unable or unwilling to leave their homes became convinced that the terrible rumor which had nearly depopulated their settlement was unfounded.

Among those who had there awaited the onslaught of the regulars was a young man from Exeter, New Hampshire. Becoming satisfied that the whole matter was a delusion, he mounted his horse and followed after the retreating multitude, undeceiving all whom he overtook. Late at night he reached Newburyport, greatly to the relief of its sleepless inhabitants, and hurried across the river, proclaiming as he rode the welcome tidings. The sun rose upon haggard and jaded fugitives, worn with excitement and fatigue, slowly returning homeward, their satisfaction at the absence of danger somewhat moderated by an unpleasant consciousness of the ludicrous scenes of their premature night flitting.

Any inference which might be drawn from the foregoing narrative derogatory to the character of the people of New England at that day, on the score of courage, would be essentially erroneous. It is true, they were not the men to court danger or rashly throw away their lives for the mere glory of the sacrifice. They had always a prudent and wholesome regard to their own comfort and safety; they justly looked upon sound heads and limbs as better than broken ones; life was to them too serious and important, and their hard-gained property too valuable, to be lightly hazarded. They never attempted to cheat

themselves by under-estimating the difficulty to be encountered, or shutting their eyes to its probable consequences. Cautious, wary, schooled in the subtle strategy of Indian warfare, where self-preservation is by no means a secondary object, they had little in common with the reckless enthusiasm of their French allies, or the stolid indifference of the fighting machines of the British regular army. When danger could no longer be avoided, they met it with firmness and iron endurance, but with a very vivid appreciation of its magnitude. Indeed, it must be admitted by all who are familiar with the history of our fathers that the element of fear held an important place among their characteristics. It exaggerated all the dangers of their earthly pilgrimage, and peopled the future with shapes of evil. Their fear of Satan invested him with some of the attributes of Omnipotence, and almost reached the point of reverence. The slightest shock of an earthquake filled all hearts with terror. Stout men trembled by their hearths with dread of some 20 paralytic old woman supposed to be a witch. And when they believed themselves called upon to grapple with these terrors and endure the afflictions of their allotment, they brought to the trial a capability of suffering undiminished by the chloroform of modern philosophy. They were heroic in endurance. Panics like the one we have described might bow and sway them like reeds in the wind; but they stood up like the oaks of their own forests beneath the thunder and the hail of actual calamity.

It was certainly lucky for the good people of Essex County that no wicked wag of a Tory undertook to immortalize in rhyme their ridiculous hegira, as Judge Hopkinson did the famous Battle of the Kegs in Philadelphia.¹²³ Like the more recent Madawaska war in Maine, the great Chepachet demonstration in Rhode Island, and the "Sauk fuss" of Wisconsin, it remains to this day "unsyllabled, unsung," and the fast-fading memory of age alone preserves the unwritten history of the great Ipswich fright.

1849

The Fish I Didn't Catch ¹²⁴

Our old homestead (the house was very old for a new country, having been built about the time that the Prince of Orange drove out James the Second) nestled under a long range of hills which stretched off to the west. It was surrounded by woods in all directions save to the southeast, where a break in the leafy wall revealed a vista of low green meadows, picturesque with wooded islands and jutting capes of upland. Through these, a small brook, noisy enough as it foamed, rippled, and laughed down its 30 rocky falls by our garden-side, wound, silently and scarcely visible, to a still larger stream, known as the Country Brook. This brook in its turn, after doing duty at two or three saw and grist mills, the clack of which we could hear in still days across the intervening woodlands, found its way to the great river, and the river took it up and bore it down to the great sea.

I have not much reason for speaking well of these meadows, or rather bogs, for they were wet most of 40 the year, but in the early days they were highly prized by the settlers, as they furnished natural mowing be-

fore the uplands could be cleared of wood and stones and laid down to grass. There is a tradition that the hay-harvesters of two adjoining towns quarrelled about a boundary question, and fought a hard battle one summer morning in that old time, not altogether bloodless, but by no means as fatal as the fight between the rival Highland clans, described by Scott in "The Fair Maid of Perth." I used to wonder at them folly, when I was stumbling over the rough hassocks, and sinking knee-deep in the black mire, raking the sharp sickle-edged grass which we used to feed out to the young cattle in midwinter when the bitter cold gave them appetite for even such fodder. I had an almost Irish hatred of snakes, and these meadows were full of them,—striped, green, dingy water-snakes, and now and then an ugly spotted adder by no means pleasant to touch with bare feet. There were great black snakes, too, in the lodges of the neighboring knolls; and on one occasion in early spring I found myself in the midst of a score at least of them,—holding their wicked meeting of a Sabbath morning on the margin of a deep spring in the meadows. One glimpse at their fierce shining heads

¹²³ "The Battle of the Kegs," a Revolutionary War ballad by Francis Hopkinson, published 1778, describes in rollicking verse the panic of the British at the sight of kegs, which they supposed filled with armed rebels, floating in the Delaware River

¹²⁴ First published in *Our Little Folks*, July, 1865, reprinted in *Child Life in Prose* (1874), and *Writings* (1888), Vol. V.

in the sunshine, as they roused themselves at my approach, was sufficient to send me at full speed towards the nearest upland. The snakes, equally scared, fled in the same direction; and, looking back, I saw the dark monsters following close at my heels, terrible as the Black Horse rebel regiment at Bull Run. I had, happily, sense enough left to step aside and let the ugly troop glide into the bushes.

Nevertheless, the meadows had their redeeming points. In spring mornings the blackbirds and bobolinks made them musical with songs; and in the evenings great bullfrogs croaked and clamored; and on summer nights we loved to watch the white wreaths of fog rising and drifting in the moonlight like troops of ghosts, with the fireflies throwing up ever and anon signals of their coming. But the Brook was far more attractive, for it had sheltered bathing-places, clear and white sanded, and weedy stretches, where the shy pickerel loved to linger, and deep pools, where the stupid sucker stirred the black mud with his fins. I had followed it all the way from its birthplace among the pleasant New Hampshire hills, through the sunshine of broad, open meadows, and under the shadow of thick woods. It was, for the most part, a sober, quiet little river; but at intervals it broke into a low, rippling laugh over rocks and trunks of fallen trees. There had, so tradition said, once been a witch-meeting on its banks, of six little old women in short, sky-blue cloaks; and if a drunken teamster could be credited, a ghost was once seen bobbing for eels under Country Bridge. It ground our corn and rye for us, at its two grist-mills; and we drove our sheep to it for their spring washing, an anniversary which was looked forward to with intense delight, for it was always rare fun for the youngsters. Macaulay has sung,—

That year young lads in Umbro
Shall plunge the struggling sheep; ¹²⁵

and his picture of the Roman sheep-washing recalled, when we read it, similar scenes in the Country Brook. On its banks we could always find the earliest and the latest wild flowers, from the pale blue, three-lobed hepatica, and small, delicate wood-anemone, to the yellow bloom of the witch-hazel burning in the leafless October woods.

Yet, after all, I think the chief attraction of the Brook to my brother and myself was the fine fishing

¹²⁵ "This year . . .," as Macaulay wrote in Horatius," VIII.

it afforded us. Our bachelor uncle who lived with us (there has always been one of that unfortunate class in every generation of our family) was a quiet, genial man, much given to hunting and fishing; and it was one of the great pleasures of our young life to accompany him on his expeditions to Great Hill, Brandy-brow Woods, the Pond, and, best of all, to the Country Brook. We were quite willing to work hard in the cornfield or the haying-lot to finish the necessary day's labor in season for an afternoon stroll through the woods and along the brookside. I remember my first fishing excursion as if it were but yesterday. I have been happy many times in my life, but never more intensely so than when I received that first fishing-pole from my uncle's hand, and trudged off with him through the woods and meadows. It was a still sweet day of early summer; the long afternoon shadows of the trees lay cool across our path; the leaves seemed greener, the flowers brighter, the birds merrier, than ever before. My uncle, who knew by long experience where were the best haunts of pickerel, considerably placed me at the most favorable point. I threw out my line as I had so often seen others, and waited anxiously for a bite, moving the bait in rapid jerks on the surface of the water in imitation of the leap of a frog. Nothing came of it. "Try again," said my uncle. Suddenly the bait sank out of sight. "Now for it," thought I; "here is a fish at last." I made a strong pull, and brought up a tangle of weeds. Again and again I cast out my line with aching arms, and drew it back empty. I looked to my uncle appealingly. "Try once more," he said. "We fishermen must have patience."

Suddenly something tugged at my line and swept off with it into deep water. Jerking it up, I saw a fine pickerel wriggling in the sun. "Uncle!" I cried, looking back in uncontrollable excitement, "I've got a fish!" "Not yet," said my uncle. As he spoke there was a plash in the water; I caught the arrowy gleam of a scared fish shooting into the middle of the stream; my hook hung empty from the line. I had lost my prize.

We are apt to speak of the sorrows of childhood as trifles in comparison with those of grown-up people; but we may depend upon it the young folks don't agree with us. Our griefs, modified and restrained by reason, experience, and self-respect, keep the proprieties, and, if possible, avoid a scene; but the sorrow of childhood, unreasoning and all-absorbing,

is a complete abandonment to the passion The doll's nose is broken, and the world breaks up with it, the marble rolls out of sight, and the solid globe rolls off with the marble

So, overcome by my great and bitter disappointment, I sat down on the nearest hassock, and for a time refused to be comforted, even by my uncle's assurance that there were more fish in the brook He refitted my bait, and, putting the pole again in my hands, told me to try my luck once more

"But remember, boy," he said, with his shrewd smile, "never brag of catching a fish until he is on

dry ground I've seen older folks doing that in more ways than one, and so making fools of themselves. It's no use to boast of anything until it's done, nor then either, for it speaks for itself"

How often since I have been reminded of the fish that I did not catch! When I hear people boasting of a work as yet undone, and trying to anticipate the credit which belongs only to actual achievement, I call to mind that scene by the brookside, and the wise caution of my uncle in that particular instance takes the form of a proverb of universal application: "Never brag of your fish before you catch him"

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES (1809-1894)

In the ripe years of his life Oliver Wendell Holmes thought the Saturday Club, which met at the Parker House for a six-hour dinner when Emerson came to Boston from near-by Concord, represented "all that was best in American literature," adding, not unmindful of the fact that he, himself, occupied an honored seat with the best-known contemporary writers and editors of New England: "Most of the Americans whom educated foreigners cared to see . . . were seated at that board." Between the publication of the *Autocrat* essays in the first numbers of the newly founded *Atlantic Monthly* in 1857 and the death of the genial Dr. Holmes in 1894, few Americans would have challenged his right to sit with the most famous literary men of his generation, but the twentieth-century critics of the "genteel tradition" succeeded for a while in whittling his reputation down to that of a pleasant wit and second-rate poet of Harvard class reunions and dining room celebrations for the contributors to the *Atlantic Monthly*.

Of course everyone knew that Dr. Holmes held an M.D. degree and lectured on anatomy at Harvard, but these facts were regarded either as the quaint eccentricity of this poet-essayist or as further evidence of his astonishing versatility. Even Holmes' early biographers seemed to share this attitude. During the past two decades, however, various scholars, critics, and biographers have discovered that Dr. Holmes was a distinguished pioneer in medical science. An eminent professor of psychiatry has found in the "medicated" novels anticipations of Freud and psychoanalysis. The latest biographer, Eleanor M. Tilton, denies the Freudianism, but insists on balancing the scientist against the man of letters. As a result of these reinterpretations of Holmes, he is now correctly recognized as an amateur in letters; but as a wit, humanist, medical reformer, and literary personality he occupies a truly unique position in the cultural history of America.

Oliver Wendell Holmes was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, August 29, 1809, on the day preceding the annual Harvard commencement, then a

community celebration resembling the opening day of a State Fair. In years to come Holmes would enliven commencements by many a poem, song, or speech in the long life which he made a perpetual circus. There was nothing suggesting a circus, however, in his eminently respectable ancestry, which included many of the old and well-known families of New England. His father, the Reverend Abiel Holmes, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Cambridge and amateur historian, was born at Woodstock, Connecticut, where the Holmes family had settled in 1686. He had graduated from Yale, and his first wife, Mary Stiles, was the daughter of Ezra Stiles, president of Yale, where Calvinistic orthodoxy still flourished. Mary Stiles Holmes died childless in 1795, and Abiel Holmes married Sarah Wendell, the only daughter of a well-to-do Boston merchant.

The fourth of the Reverend Holmes' five children (one died young) was named Oliver Wendell. While "Wendell" was still a schoolboy his two older sisters married, Mary Jackson to Dr. Usher Parsons, who had been a Navy surgeon with Commodore Perry in the Battle of Lake Erie, and Ann Susan to Charles Wentworth Upham, a Unitarian minister at Salem. The younger brother, John, was lame, and never married but remained at home to care for his parents.

Sarah Wendell Holmes, having grown up in liberal, Unitarian Boston, was by nature cheerful and sympathetic with her children, though she loyally attempted to teach them the religious doctrines of her Calvinist husband. Abiel Holmes was kindly and perhaps less austere than some of his deacons, who involved him in a bitter quarrel which split his congregation into two factions, the more conservative of which seceded and built a new church in which it installed the Reverend Holmes. These quarrels and the severe theology of his father made Oliver Wendell Holmes a lifelong foe of religious orthodoxy. "To grow up in a narrow creed and to grow out of it," he declared in maturity, "is a tremendous trial of one's nature." *Pilgrim's Progress* seemed to him "like the hunting of sinners with a pack of demons

for the amusement of the Lord of the terrestrial manor."

At school young Holmes was "moderately studious," especially fond of reading stones. His father's library of two thousand volumes contained mainly sermons, history, and biography, though the English classics were also represented. The boy acquired the fondness for books which he later extolled in his *Autocrat* essays, but he never became the wide reader that his fellow townsman, Lowell, did. Perhaps he was too much inclined to depend upon his quick brain, thinking, in his own words, that he had "drawn a prize, say a five-dollar one, in the grand intellectual life-lottery." However, he disliked another quick-witted school-mate, Margaret Fuller, and remembered with distaste, years later, that he had learned the word "trite" from her comment on a theme which he had written. Holmes prepared for Harvard, with special attention to Latin and Greek. He had more fun with a magnifying glass which his father bought for him, played the flute, bought cigars and smoked them a little at a time, keeping the stub in an old pistol barrel, into which his mother and sisters would never think of looking. It has been suggested that the cigars may have influenced his father to send him, at the age of fifteen, to Andover, a preparatory school very strict in Calvinistic orthodoxy, before entering him at Harvard. After a miserable year at Andover, Holmes left this "doctrinal boiler" for Harvard, the "rational ice-chest."

No great intellectual awakening took place during Holmes' years as an undergraduate at Harvard. He was convivial, but studied enough to graduate about midway in rank in the class of '29, a class which would become famous, partly through the achievements of Holmes. For a year he studied law half-heartedly, then found his true profession in medicine. To a friend he wrote "I know I might have made an indifferent lawyer,—I think I may make a tolerable physician,—I do not like the one, and do like the other." Perhaps he might have done better at law if he had not found more enjoyment in writing poems for an undergraduate magazine, the *Collegian*. "In that fatal year," he declared, "I had my first attack of author's lead poisoning," and never recovered. He experienced something like real fame when he published, September 16, 1830, "Old Ironsides" after hearing that the Navy was planning to scrap the frigate *Constitution*, built in 1797. The poem was widely reprinted and helped to save the ship.

In 1832, while still a medical student, Holmes began the series of essays which would lead him to real

fame a quarter of a century later. This was, of course, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, two numbers of which were published in the short-lived *New England Magazine*. Twenty-five years later Holmes revived this project in the *Atlantic Monthly* with this opening sentence "I was going to say when I was interrupted." What had interrupted him in 1832 was his absorption in medical studies. At that time, and until many years later, the medical course at Harvard consisted only of two four-month terms. If Holmes had wished merely to secure a degree and a license to practice, he might have done so without great effort or expense. But his ambitions were higher than that. He wished to learn everything possible about medical science. Consequently, he enrolled both in the Harvard Medical School and in a private school taught by Dr. James Jackson and other leading physicians of Boston. Having learned all that America had to offer, Holmes persuaded his parents, who were far from wealthy, to send him to Europe for further study in Paris.

When Holmes sailed from America on March 30, 1833, he had two purposes in mind, one scientific and the other humanistic. At that time Paris led the world in medical progress, and it was typical of Holmes that he wanted contact with the best minds in the field. And like most intellectual Americans of his generation, he also wanted to see Europe. He loved Paris at first sight, and quickly acquired sufficient facility in the French language to feel at home with the French people. He alarmed his parents by his enthusiasm for the theatre, and also by his refusal to economize, declaring that "economy, in one sense, is too expensive for a student." His plans for self-development included "a certain degree of ease," such as "a tolerably good dinner, a nice book when I want it, and that kind of comforts." He also needed money for travel and with difficulty persuaded his father to finance a second year in Europe. While abroad he visited England, Scotland, Italy, Holland, Switzerland, and Germany, enjoying in each the scenery and historical sights. In England he attended the Epsom races and declared, "Every New England deacon ought to see one Derby day to learn what sort of world this is he lives in. Man is a sporting as well as a praying animal." At the opera he saw Princess Victoria, then fifteen, and the royal family. With American irreverence he commented on William IV "The King blew his nose twice, and wiped the royal perspiration repeatedly from a face which is probably the largest uncivilized spot in England."

But Holmes did not waste much time in sight-seeing and having fun. He attended the best lecture

courses at the École de Médecine and spent many hours in the wards and hospitals. From the best teachers, especially Pierre Louis, he acquired ideas far in advance of contemporary American medical knowledge. He wrote his parents that he had learned three principles in Paris: "Not to take authority when I can have the facts; not to guess when I can know; not think a man must take physic because he is sick." Holmes returned to America in December, 1835, bringing with him a hatred for homeopathy and similar delusions, Louis' technique for keeping written case records (then unknown in the United States), and the conviction—while Pasteur was still a school-boy—that the bounds of medical knowledge would soon be extended by microscopic research.

Back in Cambridge, Holmes was granted the M.D. degree by Harvard and licensed to practice medicine in Massachusetts. But his poetic talent was recognized more quickly than his scientific ability. In 1836, one year before Emerson's great "American Scholar" address on a similar occasion, Holmes gave the Phi Beta Kappa poem at the Harvard commencement. He called the composition "Poetry: A Metrical Essay," and in it he presented, as he later remarked, "the simple and partial views of a young person trained after the schools of classical English verse as represented by Pope, Goldsmith, and Campbell, with whose lives his memory was early stocked." In most of the poems which he wrote throughout his life this neoclassical influence and taste was apparent, though he did later study and lecture on the romantic poets of England. With the brashness of youth and his infectious self-confidence, the neophyte physician recited from memory this "metrical essay" and some other verses for an hour and ten minutes, with frequent interruptions for applause. He loved applause and could seldom resist the opportunity to provoke it by public exhibitions of his wit and poetic facility. His effervescent energy and resonant voice more than compensated for his slight physique and five feet three inches of stature, and perhaps his boyish appearance contributed to his personal charm on the rostrum.

It is characteristic of Holmes, too, that his first honors in medicine were won by his pen. He wrote two dissertations in 1836, one for his M.D. degree, on acute pericarditis, and one for the Massachusetts Medical Society, on intermittent fevers in New England. The latter won a Boylston Prize at Harvard. The following year Dr. Holmes won two Boylston prizes with a dissertation on neuralgia and one on direct exploration in medical practice. The three prize-winning essays were collected into a book in

1837, Holmes' first published volume of prose. The book seems to have made a favorable impression on the medical profession in New England.

Dr. Holmes made some attempt to establish a general practice, but with slight success. Probably he was not temperamentally adapted to the life of a practitioner. His official biographer, J. T. Morse, thought his levity was a handicap:

When he said that the smallest fevers were thankfully received, the people who had no fevers laughed, but the people who had them preferred some one who would take the matter more seriously than they thought this lively young joker was likely to do.

Another witness, the minister, Dr. W. E. Channing, reported that once when he took Dr. Holmes with him to visit an invalid lady, she rose up in bed and demanded, "Dr. Channing, why do you bring that little boy in here? Take him away! This is no place for boys!" Still another witness, Dr. David W. Cheever, demonstrator for Holmes' lectures on anatomy, thought that he was "too sympathetic to practice medicine," adding:

. . . he soon abandoned the art for the science, and always maintained the same abhorrence for death and tenderness for animals. When it became necessary to have a freshly killed rabbit for his lectures, he always ran out of the room, left me to chloroform it, and besought me not to let it squeak.

It was natural, therefore, that Dr. Holmes should turn to teaching. With three other young physicians he founded Tremont Street Medical School, which was affiliated with Harvard in the awarding of degrees. He taught several courses, but most significant was the use of the microscope, something new in American medical schools of the time. For a few months in 1839-40 he served as Professor of Anatomy at Dartmouth College, returning to Cambridge and Boston between the short terms.

Some of the older physicians were no doubt irritated by Holmes' attacks upon the superstition and quackery of the profession. In 1842 he read a paper to a medical group on "Homeopathy and its Kindred Delusions," and declared, "I firmly believe that if the whole *materia medica; as now used*, could be sunk to the bottom of the sea, it would be all the better for mankind—and all the worse for the fishes." The following year he wrote a paper on "The Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever" which is still read by students of nursing and medicine. He was not the first to advance the theory that "child-bed" fever was being spread by the physicians themselves, who carried the infection on their persons and instruments,

but he was the first in America to assemble the evidence and to campaign for asepsis before bacteria had been discovered. He republished his essay in 1855 under the title, *Puerperal Fever as a Private Pestilence*, for which he wrote an introduction in which he declared sarcastically for the benefit of his critics, "I had rather rescue one mother from being poisoned by her attendant, than claim to have saved forty out of fifty patients to whom I had carried the disease."

Meanwhile Dr. Holmes felt sufficiently prosperous to choose a wife, an event which he had been considering for some time, with a combination of humor and shrewdness. On June 15, 1840, he married Amelia Lee Jackson, daughter of Charles Jackson, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, and niece of Dr. James Jackson, Holmes' beloved American teacher. In the days when the place of a wife was thought to be in the home, Amelia Jackson made a perfect partner for her husband. They had three children, the eldest being Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., who became Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. There was one daughter, Amelia, and a second son, Edward Jackson, who graduated from the Harvard Law School and served as private secretary to Charles Sumner, but died at the age of thirty-eight. Like his father, he suffered from painful attacks of asthma. A biographer of the Associate Justice has probably exaggerated the antagonism between the father and his eldest son, though there were undoubtedly conflicts between the small, extroverted "Autocrat" and his tall, reserved, philosophical namesake.

In 1847, Dr. Holmes was appointed professor of anatomy and physiology at Harvard and from '47 to '53 he served as Dean of the Medical School. After 1871 he taught anatomy only until his retirement in 1882. As a lecturer he was unquestionably the students' favorite of the entire faculty. He lectured at the most unfavorable hours of the day, in a dreary, poorly-ventilated amphitheatre, but his showmanship, his wit, and his love of his subject never failed to hold attention. To quote Dr. Chacever again, "he was never tired, always fresh, always eager in learning and teaching it. In earnest himself, enthusiastic, and of a happy temperament, he shed the glow of his ardent spirit over his fellows. . . ." Some of his more serious students, however, thought his performances were superficial, and he admitted himself that "I do not give the best lectures that I can give. I should shoot over their heads. I try to teach them a little and to teach it well." Though not himself a great original discoverer, he was, nevertheless, a thorough

scholar of medical knowledge, past and present, and was always one of the first to detect and expose sham and dishonesty in the medical profession.

But in literature he was an amateur, and never pretended to be anything else. He wrote many poems, usually on the spur of the moment for some public occasion, such as the inauguration of a Harvard president, the laying of a cornerstone, or the anniversary of an agricultural fair. Some of these "occasional" poems, especially the Rabelaisian specimens recited at medical dinners, were never gathered into his collected *Poems*. But they can hardly be a great loss. Even in his collected verse he succeeded only a few times in blending the right combination of humor and sentiment to achieve a universal appeal, as in "The Last Leaf," "My Aunt," or the more satirical "Deacon's Masterpiece." Many of his poems are still enjoyable, but they are likely to mislead the modern reader into thinking that Holmes was more genteel and sentimental than he actually was. This is the danger of ignoring Holmes the scientist, as most critics did until recent years.

Of course in reality Holmes was both a genteel "Brahmin" (his own designation for the Cambridge-Boston intellectual group to which he belonged) and a scientist. This double nature is apparent in his career as lyceum lecturer. The lecture platform became a thriving business in the 1840's and '50's, and Holmes's fondness for hearing his own voice any time, anywhere, combined with a remarkable store of information and a gift for witty aphorism, made him almost inevitably one of the most successful performers. His subjects ranged from "History of Medicine" and "Homoeopathy and Its Kindred Delusions" to "Love of Nature" and the romantic poets of England. In the forties audiences wanted to be educated, but in the next decade they became more blasé and preferred entertainment. Dr. Holmes was equal to any shift in popular taste. As Miss Tilton says, "being a form of talk, a kind of extended conversation, the lecture allowed Holmes freedom for his pin-wheel mind." Consequently, the subject was not particularly important to him. He declared that "as the head is all the better for an occasional shampooing, so the mind needs to be rubbed down with the generalities of humor." Like all really entertaining talk, his lectures were provocative rather than thorough, but sometimes he could toss off an observation that a serious critic might elaborate into a useful chapter or a book, as when he remarked:

Wordsworth's power never passed beyond his own personality, and he merely described men and things as he

found them. He cannot be illustrated, because he only adds quality to pre-existent objects, and creates nothing.

Though Holmes, with his faith in reason and science, always preferred the neoclassic to the romantic writers, he gradually warmed up to the Lake School, and Keats he thought the "most truly poetic poet of the century." But he was blind to extremists of all kinds. In Thoreau he could see only a "nullifier of civilization, who insisted on nibbling his asparagus at the wrong end." Abolitionists irritated him. In an early poem, "The Hot Season," he wrote:

The abolition men and maids
Were tanned to such a hue,
You scarce could tell them from their friends,
Unless their eyes were blue.

The pacifist he dismissed contemptuously in "The Moral Bully" as:

A timid creature, lax of knee and hip,
Whom small disturbance whitens round the lip . . .

In 1846 James Russell Lowell protested in a letter against Holmes's conservatism and the Doctor good-naturedly replied that "in a little club of ten physicians, I rather think I occupy the extreme left of the liberal side of the house." In the medical profession Dr. Holmes was undoubtedly "radical," but in all other fields he was likely to be somewhere right of center. In 1850 he congratulated Webster on his "compromise" speech of March 7. In 1855, the year he aroused the indignation of conservative physicians by reprinting his essay on puerperal fever, he became the object of bitter vituperation from Horace Greeley and most of the Northern reformers when he criticized the abolitionists and prohibitionists in a speech in New York. When the Union was threatened, however, Holmes became thoroughly aroused, and throughout the war he supported the North with fiery poems and oratory, especially after his older son hastily left Harvard to accept a commission in the Union Army. And in 1862 after seeing the battlefield at Ball's Bluff, on his famous trip to find his wounded son, Holmes was convinced "that the disease of the nation was organic, not functional, calling for the knife, and not for washes and anodynes."

Before the outbreak of the Civil War Holmes began the one work on which his literary reputation still chiefly rests, the series of essays which he called *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* (1857-58), followed by similar works called, respectively, *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table* (1859-61) and *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table* (1870-72). When the

Atlantic Monthly was founded in 1857, Holmes was one of the first writers whom the new editor, James Russell Lowell, invited to contribute. Holmes made a wise choice in returning to the literary device which he had experimented with twenty-five years earlier in the *New England Magazine*, the monologue of the garrulous talker at the boarding-house breakfast table. This loose device enabled him to exploit his natural gifts and ride the hobbies and prejudices about which he had talked and argued spiritedly for many years in classroom, lyceum hall, and private groups—such pet topics as pseudo-science, moral bullying, vulgarity, and the uselessness of syllogistic reasoning. The monologue was often almost embarrassingly personal, fully justifying the subtitle used when the essays were published in book form—"Every man his own Boswell." The book sold 10,000 copies within three days, remarkable for the time, and not bad for any age. Dr. Holmes was the most popular American author of the year, and England was almost equally enthusiastic.

In *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table*, which began to appear in the *Atlantic* in January, 1859, Holmes exploited himself less and paid more attention to his fellow boarders. Miss Tilton believes these facts indicate that "Holmes wanted to write a novel, didn't dare try it right away, but thought he'd practice a little." He created a character, Little Boston, whom he used as a vehicle of satire, and also as a means of introducing a heroine, so that the essays began to take on some of the characteristics of a story. Through these essays Professor Holmes also experimented with some of the ideas which he would later develop in his novels, especially the harm done by religious fanaticism. Meanwhile he was meeting serious opposition to a lyceum lecture on "The Chief End of Man," in which he outraged the orthodox by suggesting that the main purpose of human life was to develop the whole man, not merely the spiritual. As an observant and intelligent physician he could see the damage that had been done to health and personality by the moral repression of Calvinism. Thus, despite his social conservatism and literary gentility, he anticipated the revolt of a later age—without the slightest understanding that Walt Whitman, for whom he had no great respect, was already attempting a similar revolt.

Dr. Holmes wrote his three novels, not because he was trying to create works of art, but to inculcate certain observations about life which he had been mulling over in lecture and essay for some years. His novels were extremely awkward in technique and silly

in ideas. Nothing could be sillier than the plot of *Elsie Venner* (1861), though the ideas which he was trying to convey were far from ridiculous or trivial. The novel tells the tragic story of a young girl who acts and thinks like a snake because her mother was bitten by a snake before the daughter's birth. Certainly Dr. Holmes, the foe of pseudo-science, did not believe in prenatal influence (as he indicated in a preface), but he used this superstition merely as a symbol of those forces independent of volition which he later described in "Mechanism in Thought and Morals":

The more we examine the mechanism of thought, the more we shall see that the automatic, unconscious action of the mind enters largely into all its processes

Our dwellings are built on the shell-heaps, the kitchen-middens of the age of stone. Inherited beliefs, as obscure in their origin as the parentage of the cave-dwellers, are stronger with many minds than the evidence of the senses and the simplest deductions of the intelligence.

Thus in *The Guardian Angel* (1867), the personality of Myrtle Hazard is the psychic battleground of drives and phobias inherited from her ancestors. And the spiritual concern of the pious minister for her soul is less spiritual than perhaps even he himself realizes. At last she finds the love of the right man. She is "saved" in a deeper sense than most readers of the day were prepared to understand. Similarly, in *A Mortal Antipathy*, Maurice Kirkwood is cured of

his neurotic fear of women resulting from a traumatic shock which he received in childhood when a pretty female cousin dropped him. Whether or not Dr. Holmes actually anticipated Dr. Freud, he was obviously exploring realms of human experience untouched in his day not only by the moralist but even by the psychologist for half a century. And it is an ironical paradox that the man who fought all his life against the "determinism" of his Calvinistic father should have ended by embracing a scientific determinism no less rigid. But therapeutically there was a vast difference, for Holmes believed that crime and abnormality should be cured by scientific treatment, not avenged by a vindictive society.

Nineteenth-century American readers, however, who bought "Household" and "Cabinet" editions of his poetical works had little or no understanding of Holmes the explorer of new frontiers of mind and experience. It was the genial humorist that England, too, hailed on his second trip, in 1886, when he was greeted by royalty, the prime minister, and British authors, and was granted honorary degrees by the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh. Back in America, other honors were heaped on him, until, sitting quietly in his library, October 7, 1894, "He simply ceased to breathe." In his copy of Montaigne, Holmes had underscored a sentence which might serve as his literary epitaph:

I make no doubt but that it shall often befall me to speak of things which are better, and with more truth, handled by such as are their crafts masters.

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*Old Ironsides*¹

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!
 Long has it waved on high,
 And many an eye has danced to see
 That banner in the sky;
 Beneath it rung the battle shout,
 And burst the cannon's roar;—
 The meteor of the ocean air
 Shall sweep the clouds no more!

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,
 Where knelt the vanquished foe,
 When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,
 And waves were white below,
 No more shall feel the victor's tread,
 Or know the conquered knee;—
 The harpies of the shore shall pluck
 The eagle of the seal!

O better that her shattered hulk
 Should sink beneath the wave;
 Her thunders shook the mighty deep,
 And there should be her grave;
 Nail to the mast her holy flag,
 Set every threadbare sail,
 And give her to the god of storms,
 The lightning and the gale!

1830

*The Last Leaf*²

I saw him once before,
 As he passed by the door,
 And again
 The pavement stones resound,

¹ In September, 1830, the Secretary of the Navy planned to have the frigate *Constitution* junked. Holmes, then a law student, protested in this spontaneous poem, which was printed September 16 in the Boston *Advertiser* and was widely quoted in other papers. The ship was saved as a historical and sentimental relic, and the name of the young author became known to many Americans.

As he totters o'er the ground
 With his cane.

They say that in his prime,
 Ere the pruning-knife of Time
 Cut him down,
 Not a better man was found
 By the Crier on his round
 Through the town.

10

But now he walks the streets,
 And he looks at all he meets
 Sad and wan,
 And he shakes his feeble head,
 That it seems as if he said,
 "They are gone."

The mossy marbles rest
 On the lips that he has prest
 In their bloom,
 And the names he loved to hear
 Have been carved for many a year
 On the tomb.

20

My grandmamma has said—
 Poor old lady, she is dead
 Long ago—
 That he had a Roman nose,
 And his cheek was like a rose
 In the snow.

30

But now his nose is thin,
 And it rests upon his chin
 Like a staff,
 And a crook is in his back,
 And a melancholy crack
 In his laugh.

² The subject of the poem was Major Thomas Melville, grandfather of Herman Melville. Major Melville, a well-known businessman, was a familiar figure in Boston with his "old three-cornered hat" and knee breeches of the time of Washington. The blending of humor and pathos is typical of Holmes.

I know it is a sin
 For me to sit and grin
 At him here,
 But the old three-cornered hat,
 And the breeches, and all that,
 Are so queer!

And if I should live to be
 The last leaf upon the tree
 In the spring,
 Let them smile, as I do now,
 At the old forsaken bough
 Where I cling

My Aunt ³

My aunt! my dear unmarried aunt!
 Long years have o'er her flown,
 Yet still she strains the aching clasp
 That binds her virgin zone,
 I know it hurts her,—though she looks
 As cheerful as she can,
 Her waist is ampler than her life,
 For life is but a span

My aunt! my poor deluded aunt!
 Her hair is almost gray,
 Why will she train that winter curl
 In such a spring-like way?
 How can she lay her glasses down,
 And say she reads as well,
 When, through a double convex lens,
 She just makes out to spell?

Her father—grandpapa! forgive
 This erring lip its smiles—
 Vowed she should make the finest girl
 Within a hundred miles,
 He sent her to a stylish school,
 'T was in her thirteenth June,
 And with her, as the rules required,
 "Two towels and a spoon"

They braced my aunt against a board,
 To make her straight and tall;
 They laced her up, they starved her down,
 To make her light and small;
 They pinched her feet, they singed her hair,

They screwed it up with pins;—
 O never mortal suffered more
 In penance for her sins

40 So, when my precious aunt was done,
 My grandsire brought her back;
 (By daylight, lest some rabid youth
 Might follow on the track,)
 "Ah!" said my grandsire, as he shook
 Some powder in his pan,
 "What could this lovely creature do
 Against a desperate man!"

1831

Alas! nor chariot, nor baiouche,
 Nor bandit cavalcade,
 Tore from the trembling father's arms
 His all-accomplished maid.
 For her how happy had it been!
 And Heaven had spared to me
 To see one sad, ungathered rose
 On my ancestral tree.

1831

Extracts from a Medical Poem ⁴

The Stability of Science

10 The feeble sea-birds, blinded in the storms,
 On some tall lighthouse dash their little forms,
 And the rude granite scatters for their pains
 Those small deposits that were meant for brains.
 Yet the proud fabric in the morning's sun
 Stands all unconscious of the mischief done,
 Still the red beacon pours its evening rays
 For the lost pilot with as full a blaze,
 Nay, shines, all radiance, o'er the scattered fleet
 Of gulls and boobies brainless at its feet.

10

20 I tell their fate, though courtesy disclaims
 To call our kind by such ungentle names;
 Yet, if your rashness bid you vainly dare,
 Think of their doom, ye simple, and beware!

See where aloft its hoary forehead rears
 The towering pride of twice a thousand years!
 Far, far below the vast incumbent pile
 Sleeps the gray rock from art's Ægean isle,
 Its massive courses, circling as they rise,
 Swell from the waves to mingle with the skies;
 There every quarry lends its marble spoil,
 And clustering ages blend their common toil;
 The Greek, the Roman, reared its ancient walls,

20

³ First printed in the *New England Magazine*, October, 1831,
 and reprinted in *Poems* in 1836.

⁴ Published in *Poems*, 1849

The silent Arab arched its mystic halls;
In that fair niche, by countless billows laved,
Trace the deep lines that Sydenham⁵ engraved;
On yon broad front that breasts the changing
swell,

Mark where the ponderous sledge of Hunter⁶
fell;

By that square buttress look where Louis⁷ stands,
The stone yet warm from his uplifted hands; 30
And say, O Science, shall thy 'life-blood freeze,
When fluttering folly flaps on walls like these?

A Portrait⁸

Thoughtful in youth, but not austere in age;
Calm, but not cold, and cheerful though a sage;
Too true to flatter, and too kind to sneer,
And only just when seemingly severe;
So gently blending courtesy and art,
That wisdom's lips seemed borrowing friendship's
heart.

Taught by the sorrows that his age had known
In others' trials to forget his own, 40
As hour by hour his lengthened day declined,
A sweeter radiance lingered o'er his mind.
Cold were the lips that spoke his early praise,
And hushed the voices of his morning days,
Yet the same accents dwelt on every tongue,
And love renewing kept him ever young.

A Sentiment

'Ο βίος βραχύς,—life is but a song;
'Η τέχνη μακρή,—art is wondrous long;
Yet to the wise her paths are ever fair,
And Patience smiles, though Genius may despair. 50
Give us but knowledge, though by slow degrees,
And blend our toil with moments bright as these;
Let Friendship's accents cheer our doubtful way,
And Love's pure planet lend its guiding ray,—
Our tardy Art shall wear an angel's wings,
And life shall lengthen with the joy it brings!

1849

⁵ Thomas Sydenham (1624–89), English physician.

⁶ John Hunter (1784–1850), Boston anatomist and physician.

⁷ Holmes studied under Pierre Charles Alexandre Louis in Paris.

⁸ The subject was Dr. James Jackson (1777–1867), Holmes's best loved American teacher.

⁹ Published first in the *Autocrat* essays in the *Atlantic Monthly*, 1858, and reprinted in *Songs in Many Keys*, 1862. The so-called "pearly nautilus" is a shellfish of the South Pacific and Indian oceans having a spiral chambered shell, pearly on the

*The Chambered Nautilus*⁹

This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,
Sails the unshadowed main,—
The venturous bark that flings
On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings
In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings,
And coral reefs lie bare,
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their stream-
ing hair.

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!
And every chambered cell, 10
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,
Before thee lies revealed,—
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!

Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new, 40
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door, 20
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the
old no more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,
Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap, forlorn!
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born
Than ever Triton blew from wreathéd horn! 10
While on mine ear it rings,
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice
that sings:—

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll! 30
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting
seal! 1858

inside. It is supposed to have a membrane which serves as a sail. See N. F. Adkins, "The Chambered Nautilus: Its Scientific and Poetic Backgrounds," *American Literature*, IX, 458–465 (January, 1938).

¹⁰ Cf. Wordsworth's sonnet, "The World is too Much with Us."

*The Deacon's Masterpiece,*¹¹

OR, THE WONDERFUL "ONE-HOSS SHAY"
A LOGICAL STORY

Have you heard of the wonderful one-hoss shay,
That was built in such a logical way
It ran a hundred years to a day,
And then, of a sudden, it — ah, but stay,
I'll tell you what happened without delay,
Scaring the parson into fits,
Frightening people out of their wits,—
Have you ever heard of that, I say?

Seventeen hundred and fifty-five
Georgius Secundus was then alive,—
Snuffy old drone from the German hive
That was the year when Lisbon-town¹²
Saw the earth open and gulp her down,
And Braddock's army was done so brown,
Left without a scalp to its crown
It was on the terrible Earthquake-day
That the Deacon finished the one-hoss shay.

Now in building of chaises, I tell you what,
There is always *somewhere* a weakest spot,—
In hub, tire, felloe, in spring or thill,
In panel, or crossbar, or floor, or sill,
In screw, bolt, thoroughbrace,—lurking still,
Find it somewhere you must and will,—
Above or below, or within or without,—
And that's the reason, beyond a doubt,
That a chaise *breaks down*, but does n't *wear out*

But the Deacon swore, (as Deacons do,
With an "I dew vum," or an "I tell yeou,")
He would build one shay to beat the town
'n' the county 'n' all the kentry raoun';
It should be so built that it *couldn't* break down
—"Fur," said the Deacon, "'t's mighty plain
Thut the weakes' place mus' stan' the strain,
'n' the way t' fix it, uz I maintain,

Is only jest

T' make that place uz strong uz the rest."

So the Deacon inquired of the village folk
Where he could find the strongest oak,

¹¹ Included in No. IX of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, September, 1858. The poem is a satire on the severe logic of Calvinism, the theology of the poet's father.

¹² Some thought the earthquake in Lisbon in 1755 cast doubt on the goodness of the Creator

That could n't be split nor bent nor broke,—
That was for spokes and floor and sills;
He sent for lancewood to make the thills;
The crossbars were ash, from the straightest trees,
The panels of white-wood, that cuts like cheese,
But lasts like iron for things like these,
The hubs of logs from the "Settler's ellum,"—
Last of its timber,—they could n't sell 'em,
Never an axe had seen their chips,
And the wedges flew from between their lips,
Their blunt ends frizzled like celery-tips,
Step and prop-iron, bolt and screw,
Spring, tire, axle, and linchpin too,
Steel of the finest, bright and blue,
Thoroughbrace bison-skin, thick and wide,
Boot, top, dasher, from tough old hide
Found in the pit when the tanner died
That was the way he "put her through"—
"There!" said the Deacon, "naow she 'll dew!"

Do! I tell you, I rather guess
She was a wonder, and nothing less!
Colts grew horses, beards turned gray,
Deacon and deaconess dropped away,
Children and grandchildren—where were they?
But there stood the stout old one-hoss shay
As fresh as on Lisbon-earthquake-day!

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED,—it came and found
The Deacon's masterpiece strong and sound
Eighteen hundred increased by ten,—
"Hahnsum kernidge" they called it then
Eighteen hundred and twenty came,—
Running as usual, much the same.
Thirty and forty at last arrive,
And then come fifty, and FIFTY-FIVE.

Little of all we value here
Wakes on the morn of its hundredth year
Without both feeling and looking queer.
In fact, there's nothing that keeps its youth,
So far as I know, but a tree and truth.
(This is a moral that runs at large,
Take it—You're welcome—No extra charge.)

FIRST OF NOVEMBER,—the Earthquake-day—
There are traces of age in the one-hoss shay,
A general flavor of mild decay,
But nothing local, as one may say
There could n't be,—for the Deacon's art
Had made it so like in every part

That there wasn't a chance for one to start.
 For the wheels were just as strong as the thills,
 And the floor was just as strong as the sills,
 And the panels just as strong as the floor,
 And the whipple-tree neither less nor more,
 And the back-crossbar as strong as the fore,
 And spring and axle and hub *encore*.
 And yet, *as a whole*, it is past a doubt
 In another hour it will be *worn out*!

First of November, 'Fifty-five!
 This morning the parson takes a drive.
 Now, small boys, get out of the way!
 Here comes the wonderful one-hoss shay,
 Drawn by a rat-tailed, ewe-necked bay.
 "Huddup!" said the parson.—Off went they.
 The parson was working his Sunday's text,—
 Had got to *fifthly*, and stopped perplexed
 At what the—Moses—was coming next.
 All at once the horse stood still,
 Close by the meet'n'-house on the hill.
 —First a shiver, and then a thrill,
 Then something decidedly like a spill,—
 And the parson was sitting upon a rock,
 At half past nine by the meet'n'-house clock,—
 Just the hour of the Earthquake shock!

—What do you think the parson found,
 When he got up and stared around?
 The poor old chaise in a heap or mound,
 As if it had been to the mill and ground!
 You see, of course, if you're not a dunce,
 How it went to pieces all at once,—
 All at once, and nothing first,—
 Just as bubbles do when they burst.

End of the wonderful one-hoss shay.
 Logic is logic. That's all I say.

*The Boys*¹³

Has there any old fellow got mixed with the boys?
 If there has, take him out, without making a noise.
 Hang the Almanac's cheat and the Catalogue's
 spite!
 Old time is a liar! We're twenty to-night!

¹³ Written for the thirtieth reunion of Holmes's Harvard class of 1829. Published in 1859 in *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table*, in the February *Atlantic*.

We're twenty! We're twenty! Who says we are
 more?
 He's tipsy,—young jackanapes!—show him the
 door!

90 "Gray temples at twenty!"—Yes! *white* if we
 please;
 Where the snow-flakes fall thickest there's noth-
 ing can freeze!

Was it snowing I spoke of? Excuse the mistake!
 Look close,—you will see not a sign of a flake! 10
 We want some new garlands for those we have
 shed,—

And these are white roses in place of the red.

We've a trick, we young fellows, you may have
 been told,
 Of talking (in public) as if we were old:—
 That boy we call "Doctor,"¹⁴ and this we call
 "Judge";¹⁵

It's a neat little fiction, of course it's all fudge.
 That fellow's the "Speaker,"¹⁶—the one on the
 right;

"Mr. Mayor,"¹⁷ my young one, how are you
 to-night?

120 That's our "Member of Congress,"¹⁸ we say
 when we chaff;

There's the "Reverend"¹⁹ What's his name?—
 don't make me laugh. 20

That boy with the grave mathematical look²⁰
 Made believe he had written a wonderful book,
 And the ROYAL SOCIETY thought it was *true*!
 So they chose him right in; a good joke it was,
 too!

There's a boy, we pretend, with a three-decker
 brain,²¹

That could harness a team with a logical chain;
 When he spoke for our manhood in syllabled fire,
 We called him "The Justice," but now he's "The
 Squire."

¹⁴ Dr. Francis Thomas.

¹⁵ G. T. Bigelow, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts.

¹⁶ Hon. Francis B. Crowninshield, Speaker of Massachusetts House of Representatives.

¹⁷ G. W. Richardson, Worcester, Mass.

¹⁸ Hon. George T. Davis, member of Congress.

¹⁹ James Freeman Clarke, prominent pastor and editor.

²⁰ Benjamin Peirce.

²¹ Judge Benjamin R. Curtis, Supreme Court of the United States.

And there's a nice youngster of excellent pith,—
 Fate tried to conceal him by naming him
 Smith,²² 30
 But he shouted a song for the brave and the
 free,—
 Just read on his medal, "My country," "of thee!"
 You hear that boy laughing?²³—You think he's
 all fun,
 But the angels laugh, too, at the good he has done,
 The children laugh loud as they troop to his call,
 And the poor man that knows him laughs loudest
 of all!

Yes, we're boys,—always playing with tongue or
 with pen,—
 And I sometimes have asked,—Shall we ever be
 men?
 Shall we always be youthful, and laughing, and
 gay,
 Till the last dear companion drops smiling away? 40

Then here's to our boyhood, its gold and its gray!
 The stars of its winter, the dews of its May!
 And when we have done with our life-lasting toys,
 Dear Father, take care of thy children THE BOYS!
 1859

*Brother Jonathan's Lament
 for Sister Caroline*²⁴

She has gone,—she has left us in passion and
 pride,—
 Our stormy-browed sister, so long at our side!
 She has torn her own star from our firmament's
 glow,
 And turned on her brother the face of a foe!

O Caroline, Caroline, child of the sun,
 We can never forget that our hearts have been
 one,—
 Our foreheads both sprinkled in Liberty's name,
 From the fountain of blood with the finger of
 flame!

²² S. F. Smith, author of "My Country, 'tis of Thee"

²³ The Rev. Samuel May, reformer and abolitionist

²⁴ Poem dated March 25, 1861. South Carolina declared her secession from the Union on December 20, 1860. Fort Sumter was fired on by Confederate troops on April 12, 1861. Holmes published his poem in the May, 1861, *Atlantic Monthly*.

You were always too ready to fire at a touch,
 But we said, "She is hasty,—she does not mean
 much." 10
 We have scowled, when you uttered some tur-
 bulent threat.
 But Friendship still whispered, "Forgive and
 forget!"

Has our love all died out? Have its altars grown
 cold?
 Has the curse come at last which the fathers
 foretold?
 Then Nature must teach us the strength of the
 chain
 That her petulant children would sever in vain.

They may fight till the buzzards are gorged with
 their spoil,
 Till the harvest grows black as it rots in the soil,
 Till the wolves and the catamounts troop from
 their caves,
 And the shark tracks the pirate, the lord of the
 waves 20

In vain is the strife! When its fury is past,
 Their fortunes must flow in one channel at last,
 As the torrents that rush from the mountains of
 snow
 Roll mingled in peace through the valleys below.

Our Union is river, lake, ocean, and sky
 Man breaks not the medal, when God cuts the
 die!
 Though darkened with sulphur, though cloven
 with steel,
 The blue arch will brighten, the waters will heal!

O Caroline, Caroline, child of the sun,
 There are battles with Fate that can never be
 won! 30
 The star-flowering banner must never be furled,
 For its blossoms of light are the hope of the
 world!

Go, then, our rash sister! afar and aloof,
 Run wild in the sunshine away from our roof;
 But when your heart aches and your feet have
 grown sore,
 Remember the pathway that leads to our door!

March 25, 1861 1861

*The Moral Bully*²⁵

Yon whey-faced brother, who delights to wear
 A weedy flux of ill-conditioned hair,
 Seems of the sort that in a crowded place
 One elbows freely into smallest space;
 A timid creature, lax of knee and hip,
 Whom small disturbance whitens round the lip;
 One of those harmless spectacled machines,
 The Holy-Week of Protestants convenes;
 Whom school-boys question if their walk tran-
 scends

The last advices of maternal friends;
 Whom John, obedient to his master's sign,
 Conducts, laborious, up to *ninety-nine*,
 While Peter, glistening with luxurious scorn,
 Husks his white ivories like an ear of corn;
 Dark in the brow and bilious in the cheek,
 Whose yellowish linen flowers but once a week,
 Conspicuous, annual, in their threadbare suits,
 And the laced high-lows which they call their
 boots

Well mayst thou *shun* that dingy front severe,
 But him, O stranger, him thou canst not *fear*!

Be slow to judge, and slower to despise,
 Man of broad shoulders and heroic size!
 The tiger, writhing from the boa's rings,
 Drops at the fountain where the cobra stings.
 In that lean phantom, whose extended glove
 Points to the text of universal love,
 Behold the master that can tame thee down
 To crouch, the vassal of his Sunday frown;
 His velvet throat against thy corded wrist,
 His loosened tongue against thy doubled fist!

The MORAL BULLY, though he never swears,
 Nor kicks intruders down his entry stairs,
 Though meekness plants his backward-sloping hat,
 And non-resistance ties his white cravat,
 Though his black broadcloth glories to be seen
 In the same plight with Shylock's gaberdine,
 Hugs the same passion to his narrow breast
 That heaves the cuirass on the trooper's chest,
 Hears the same hell-hounds yelling in his rear
 That chase from port the maddened buccaneer,

²⁵ Originally part of a long poem, "Astræa: the Balance of Illusions," delivered before the Yale chapter of Phi Beta Kappa in 1850, and printed the same year in pamphlet form; printed in *Songs in Many Keys*, 1862. Holmes never liked moral reformers.

Feels the same comfort while his acrid words
 Turn the sweet milk of kindness into curds,
 Or with grim logic prove, beyond debate,
 That all we love is worthiest of our hate,
 As the scarred ruffian of the pirate's deck,
 When his long swivel rakes the staggering wreck!

Heaven keep us all! Is every rascal clown
 Whose arm is stronger free to knock us down?
 Has every scarecrow, whose cachectic soul
 Seems fresh from Bedlam, airing on parole,
 Who, though he carries but a doubtful trace
 Of angel visits on his hungry face,
 From lack of marrow or the coins to pay,
 Has dodged some vices in a shabby way,
 The right to stick us with his cutthroat terms,
 And bait his homilies with his brother worms?
 1850 1862

*Dorothy Q*²⁶

A FAMILY PORTRAIT

Grandmother's mother: her age, I guess,
 Thirteen summers, or something less;
 Girlish bust, but womanly air;
 Smooth, square forehead with uprolled hair;
 Lips that lover has never kissed;
 Taper fingers and slender wrist;
 Hanging sleeves of stiff brocade;
 So they painted the little maid.

On her hand a parrot green
 Sits unmoving and broods serene.
 Hold up the canvas full in view,—
 Look! there's a rent the light shines through,
 Dark with a century's fringe of dust,—
 That was a Red-Coat's rapier-thrust!
 Such is the tale the lady old,
 Dorothy's daughter's daughter, told.

Who the painter was none may tell,—
 One whose best was not over well;
 Hard and dry, it must be confessed,

²⁶ Published in *Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1871; reprinted in *Songs of Many Seasons*, 1875. Holmes has described this portrait in prose: "It was a young girl in antique costume, which made her look at first sight almost like a grown woman. The frame was old, massive, carved, gilded—the canvas had been stabbed by a sword-thrust—the British officer had aimed at the right eye and missed it. The young lady was Dorothy Quincy, aunt of the young patriot known as Josiah Quincy Junior." Holmes's great-grandmother was the niece of Josiah Quincy, Jr.

Flat as a rose that has long been pressed,
 Yet in her cheek the hues are bright,
 Dainty colors of red and white,
 And in her slender shape are seen
 Hint and promise of stately mien

Look not on her with eyes of scorn,—
 Dorothy Q was a lady born!
 Ay! since the galloping Normans came,
 England's annals have known her name,
 And still to the three-hilled rebel town
 Dear is that ancient name's renown,
 For many a civic wreath they won,
 The youthful sire and the gray-haired son

O Damsel Dorothy! Dorothy Q!
 Strange is the gift that I owe to you,
 Such a gift as never a king
 Save to daughter or son might bring,—
 All my tenure of heart and hand,
 All my title to house and land,
 Mother and sister and child and wife
 And joy and sorrow and death and life!

What if a hundred years ago
 Those close-shut lips had answered No,
 When forth the tremulous question came
 That cost the maiden her Norman name,
 And under the folds that look so still
 The bodice swelled with the bosom's thrill?
 Should I be I, or would it be
 One tenth another, to nine tenths me?

Soft is the breath of a maiden's yes
 Not the light gossamer stirs with less;
 But never a cable that holds so fast
 Through all the battles of wave and blast,
 And never an echo of speech or song
 That lives in the babbling air so long!
 There were tones in the voice that whispered then
 You may hear to-day in a hundred men

O lady and lover, how faint and far
 Your images hover,—and here we are,
 Solid and stirring in flesh and bone,—
 Edward's and Dorothy's—all their own,—
 A goodly record for Time to show
 Of a syllable spoken so long ago!—
 Shall I bless you, Dorothy, or forgive
 For the tender whisper that bade me live?

20 It shall be a blessing, my little maid!
 I will heal the stab of the Red-Coat's blade,
 And freshen the gold of the tarnished frame,
 And gild with a rhyme your household name;
 So you shall smile on us brave and bright
 As first you greeted the morning's light,
 And live untroubled by woes and fears
 Through a second youth of a hundred years
 1871 70

30 *Epilogue to the Breakfast-Table Series*²⁷

AUTOCRAT—PROFESSOR—POET
 AT A BOOKSTORE

Anno Domini 1972

A crazy bookcase, placed before
 A low-price dealer's open door,
 Therein arrayed in broken rows
 A ragged crew of rhyme and prose,
 The homeless vagrants, waifs and strays
 Whose low estate this line betrays
 40 (Set forth the lesser birds to lime)
 YOUR CHOICE AMONG THESE BOOKS,
 1 DIME!
 Ho! dealer, for its motto's sake
 This scarecrow from the shelf I take,
 10 Thrice starveling volumes bound in one,
 Its covers warping in the sun
 Methinks it hath a musty smell,
 I like its flavor none too well,
 But Yorick's brain was far from dull,
 Though Hamlet pah'd, and dropped his skull.²⁸
 50 Why, here comes rain! The sky grows dark,—
 Was that the roll of thunder? Hark!
 The shop affords a safe retreat,
 A chair extends its welcome seat,
 20 The tradesman has a civil look
 (I've paid, impromptu, for my book),
 The clouds portend a sudden shower,—
 I'll read my purchase for an hour

* * *

60 What have I rescued from the shelf?
 A Boswell, writing out himself!
 For though he changes dress and name,

²⁷ Published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, December, 1872; *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table*, 1872, *Songs of Many Seasons*, 1875.

²⁸ Cf. *Hamlet* IV, v

The man beneath is still the same,
 Laughing or sad, by fits and starts,
 One actor in a dozen parts,
 And whatsoe'er the mask may be,
 The voice assures us, *This is he.*

I say not this to cry him down;
 I find my Shakespeare in his clown,
 His rogues the selfsame parent own;
 Nay! Satan talks in Milton's tone!
 Where'er the ocean inlet strays,
 The salt sea wave its source betrays,
 Where'er the queen of summer blows,
 She tells the zephyr, "I'm the rose!"

And his is not the playwright's page;
 His table does not ape the stage;
 What matter if the figures seen
 Are only shadows on a screen,
 He finds in them his lurking thought,
 And on their lips the words he sought,
 Like one who sits before the keys
 And plays a tune himself to please.

And was he noted in his day?
 Read, flattered, honored? Who shall say?
 Poor wreck of time the wave has cast
 To find a peaceful shore at last,
 Once glorying in thy gilded name
 And freighted deep with hopes of fame,
 Thy leaf is moistened with a tear,
 The first for many a long, long year!

For be it more or less of art
 That veils the lowliest human heart
 Where passion throbs, where friendship glows,
 Where pity's tender tribute flows,
 Where love has lit its fragrant fire,
 And sorrow quenched its vain desire,
 For me the altar is divine,
 Its flame, its ashes,—all are mine!

And thou, my brother, as I look
 And see thee pictured in thy book,
 Thy years on every page confessed
 In shadows lengthening from the west,
 Thy glance that wanders, as it sought
 Some freshly opening flower of thought,
 Thy hopeful nature, light and free,
 I start to find myself in thee!

* * *

Come, vagrant, outcast, wretch forlorn
 In leather jerkin stained and torn,
 30 Whose talk has filled my idle hour
 And made me half forget the shower,
 I'll do at least as much for you.
 Your coat I'll patch, your guilt renew,
 Read you—perhaps—some other time.
 Not bad, my bargain! Price one dime!

1872

80

To H. W. Longfellow²⁹

BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR EUROPE,

MAY 27, 1868

40

Our Poet, who has taught the Western breeze
 To waft his songs before him o'er the seas,
 Will find them wheresoe'er his wanderings reach
 Borne on the spreading tide of English speech
 Twin with the rhythmic waves that kiss the
 farthest beach.

Where shall the singing bird a stranger be
 That finds a nest for him in every tree?
 How shall he travel who can never go
 50 Where his own voice the echoes do not know,
 Where his own garden flowers no longer learn
 to grow?

10

Ah, gentlest soul! how gracious, how benign
 Breathes through out troubled life that voice
 of thine,
 Filled with a sweetness born of happier spheres,
 That wins and warms, that kindles, softens,
 cheers,
 That calms the wildest woe and stays the bitterest
 tears!

60

Forgive the simple words that sound like praise;
 The mist before me dims my gilded phrase;
 Our speech at best is half alive and cold,
 And save that tenderer moments make us bold
 Our whitening lips would close, their truest truth
 untold.

20

We who behold our autumn sun below
 The Scorpion's sign, against the Archer's bow,
 Know well what parting means of friend from
 friend;
 70 After the snows no freshening dews descend,
 And what the frost has marred, the sunshine will
 not mend.

²⁹ Published in *Songs of Many Seasons*, 1875.

So we all count the months, the weeks, the days,
That keep thee from us in unwonted ways,
Grudging to alien hearths our widowed time,
And one has shaped a breath in artless rhyme
That sighs, "We track thee still through each
remotest clime"

What wishes, longings, blessings, prayers
shall be

The more than golden freight that floats with
thee!
And know, whatever welcome thou shalt find—
Thou who hast won the hearts of half man-
kind,—

30 The proudest, fondest love thou leavest still
behind!

1868

1875

FROM

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table ³⁰

I

I was just going to say, when I was interrupted,³¹ that one of the many ways of classifying minds is under the heads of arithmetical and algebraical intellects. All economical and practical wisdom is an extension or variation of the following arithmetical formula $2 + 2 = 4$. Every philosophical proposition has the more general character of the expression $a + b = c$. We are mere operatives, empirics, and ¹⁰ egotists, until we learn to think in letters instead of figures.

They all stared. There is a divinity student lately come among us to whom I commonly address remarks like the above, allowing him to take a certain share in the conversation, so far as assent or pertinent questions are involved. He abused his liberty on this occasion by presuming to say that Leibnitz ³² had the same observation.—No, sir, I replied, he has not. But he said a mighty good thing about mathematics, ²⁰ that sounds something like it, and you found it, *not in the original*, but quoted by Dr. Thomas Reid.³³ I will tell the company what he did say, one of these days.

—If I belong to a Society of Mutual Admira-

tion? ³⁴—I blush to say that I do not at this present moment I once did, however. It was the first association to which I ever heard the term applied, a body of scientific young men in a great foreign city * who admired their teacher, and to some extent each other. Many of them deserved it, they have become famous since. It amuses me to hear the talk of one of those beings described by Thackeray—

Letters four do form his name—³⁵

about a social development which belongs to the very noblest stage of civilization. All generous companies of artists, authors, philanthropists, men of science, are, or ought to be, Societies of Mutual Admiration. A man of genius, or any kind of superiority, is not debarred from admiring the same quality in another, nor the other from returning his admiration. They may even associate together and continue to think highly of each other. And so of a dozen such men, if any one place is fortunate enough to hold so many. The being referred to above assumes several false premises. First, that men of talent necessarily hate each other. Secondly, that intimate knowledge or habitual association destroys our admiration of persons whom we esteemed highly at a distance.

* [This was the Société d'Observation Médicale, of Paris, of which Holmes' teacher, Pierre Louis, was president.] They agreed in admiring their justly-honored president, and thought highly of some of their associates, who have since made good their promise of distinction.

³⁴ In a long footnote to the edition of 1882 Holmes indicated that he had the Saturday Club in mind, though he was not himself a member in 1857. However, as a result of this essay, he was soon invited to join. It was an informal group, including Emerson, Longfellow, Agassiz, Pierce, Hawthorne, Motley, and Sumner, which met once a month. See E. W. Emerson, *Early Years of the Saturday Club, 1855-1870*, Boston, 1918.

³⁵ S N O B. The quotation is actually from Coleridge's "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter," referring to Pitt.

³⁰ Published in the *Atlantic Monthly* from November, 1857, through October, 1858, then collected in a book. The poems scattered through the *Autocrat* essays published in the *Atlantic* have not been published in the same order in any of the collected editions.

³¹ Critics like to explain that Holmes had been interrupted for twenty-five years. He published two "Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table" essays in the *New England Magazine*, November, 1831 and February, 1832. These were not collected in the *Autocrat* book.

³² Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz (1646-1716), German philosopher.

³³ Dr. Thomas Reid (1710-96), Scottish philosopher, founder of the "common-sense" school.

Thirdly, that a circle of clever fellows, who meet together to dine and have a good time, have signed a constitutional compact to glorify themselves and to put down him and the fraction of the human race not belonging to their number. Fourthly, that it is an outrage that he is not asked to join them.

Here the company laughed a good deal, and the old gentleman who sits opposite said: "That's it! that's it!"

I continued, for I was in the talking vein. As to 10 clever people's hating each other, I think *a little* extra talent does sometimes make people jealous. They become irritated by perpetual attempts and failures, and it hurts their tempers and dispositions. Unpretending mediocrity is good, and genius is glorious; but a weak flavor of genius in an essentially common person is detestable. It spoils the grand neutrality of a commonplace character, as the rinsings of an unwashed wine-glass spoil a draught of fair water. No wonder the poor fellow we spoke of, who 20 always belongs to this class of slightly flavored mediocrities, is puzzled and vexed by the strange sight of a dozen men of capacity working and playing together in harmony. He and his fellows are always fighting. With them familiarity naturally breeds contempt. If they ever praise each other's bad drawings, or broken-winded novels, or spavined verses, nobody ever supposed it was from admiration; it was simply a contract between themselves and a publisher or dealer.

If the Mutuels have really nothing among them worth admiring, that alters the question. But if they are men with noble powers and qualities, let me tell you, that, next to youthful love and family affections, there is no human sentiment better than that which unites the Societies of Mutual Admiration. And what would literature or art be without such associations? Who can tell what we owe to the Mutual Admiration Society of which Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher were mem- 40 bers? ³⁶ Or to that of which Addison and Steele formed the centre, and which gave us the *Spectator*? Or to that where Johnson, and Goldsmith, and Burke, and Reynolds, and Beauclerk, and Boswell, most admiring among all admirers, met together? Was there any great harm in the fact that the Irvings

and Paulding wrote in company? ³⁷ or any unpardonable cabal in the literary union of Verplanck and Bryant and Sands, and as many more as they chose to associate with them? ³⁸

The poor creature does not know what he is talking about when he abuses this noblest of institutions. Let him inspect its mysteries through the knot-hole he has secured, but not use that orifice as a medium for his popgun. Such a society is the crown of a literary metropolis; if a town has not material for it, and spirit and good feeling enough to organize it, it is a mere caravansary, fit for a man of genius to lodge in, but not to live in. Foolish people hate and dread and envy such an association of men of varied powers and influence, because it is lofty, serene, impregnable, and, by the necessity of the case, exclusive. Wise ones are prouder of the title M.S.M.A. than of all their other honors put together.

—All generous minds have a horror of what are commonly called "facts." They are the brute beasts of the intellectual domain. Who does not know fellows that always have an ill-conditioned fact or two which they lead after them into decent company like so many bull-dogs, ready to let them slip at every ingenious suggestion, or convenient generalization, or pleasant fancy? I allow no "facts" at this table. What! Because bread is good and wholesome, and necessary and nourishing, shall you thrust a crumb into my windpipe while I am talking? Do not these 30 muscles of mine represent a hundred loaves of bread? and is not my thought the abstract of ten thousand of these crumbs of truth with which you would choke off my speech?

[The above remark must be conditioned and qualified for the vulgar mind. The reader will, of course, understand the precise amount of seasoning which must be added to it before he adopts it as one of the axioms of his life. The speaker disclaims all responsibility for its abuse in incompetent hands.]

This business of conversation is a very serious matter. There are men whom it weakens one to talk with an hour more than a day's fasting would do. Mark this which I am going to say, for it is as good as a working professional man's advice, and costs you nothing: It is better to lose a pint of blood from your veins than to have a nerve tapped. Nobody measures

³⁶ They met at the Mermaid Tavern.

³⁷ James K. Paulding collaborated with Washington Irving in writing the *Salmagundi* papers.

³⁸ Gulian Crommelin Verplanck, William Cullen Bryant, and Robert Charles Sands jointly edited an annual called *The Talisman*, 1828-30.

your nervous force as it runs away, nor bandages your brain and marrow after the operation

There are men of *esprit* who are excessively exhausting to some people. They are the talkers who have what may be called *jerky* minds. Their thoughts do not run in the natural order of sequence. They say bright things on all possible subjects, but their zigzags rack you to death. After a jolting half-hour with one of these jerky companions, talking with a dull friend affords great relief. It is like taking the cat in your lap after holding a squirrel.

What a comfort a dull but kindly person is, to be sure, at times! A ground-glass shade over a gas-lamp does not bring more solace to our dazzled eyes than such a one to our minds . . .

—The men of genius that I fancy most, have erectile heads like the cobra-di-cappello.³⁹ You remember what they tell of William Pinkney,⁴⁰ the great pleader, how in his eloquent paroxysms the veins of his neck would swell and his face flush and his eyes glitter, until he seemed on the verge of apoplexy. The hydrauliic arrangements for supplying the brain with blood are only second in importance to its own organization. The bulbous-headed fellows who steam well when they are at work are the men that draw big audiences and give us marrowy books and pictures. It is a good sign to have one's feet grow cold when he is writing. A great writer and speaker once told me that he often wrote with his feet in hot water, but for this, *all* his blood would have run into his head, as the mercury sometimes withdraws into the ball of a thermometer.

—You don't suppose that my remarks made at this table are like so many postage-stamps, do you,—each to be only once uttered? If you do, you are mistaken. He must be a poor creature who does not often repeat himself. Imagine the author of the excellent piece of advice, "Know thyself,"⁴¹ never alluding to that sentiment again during the course of a protracted existence! Why, the truths a man carries about with him are his tools, and do you think a carpenter is bound to use the same plane but once to smooth a knotty board with, or to hang up his ham-

³⁹ Hooded cobra

⁴⁰ William Pinkney (1764-1822), American lawyer and statesman, helped draw up the Missouri Compromise, was Minister to Russia, and was a member of both the House of Representatives and the Senate

⁴¹ Quoted by Juvenal, *Satires* XI, 27, but also the famous maxim of Socrates

mer after it has driven its first nail? I shall never repeat a conversation, but an idea often I shall use the same types when I like, but not commonly the same stereotypes. A thought is often original, though you have uttered it a hundred times. It has come to you over a new route, by a new and express train of associations.

Sometimes, but rarely, one may be caught making the same speech twice over, and yet be held blameless. Thus, a certain lecturer, after performing in an inland city, where dwells a *Littérature* of note, was invited to meet her and others over the social tea-cup. She pleasantly referred to his many wanderings in his new occupation. "Yes," he replied, "I am like the Huma,"⁴² the bird that never lights, being always in the cars, as he is always on the wing."—Years elapsed. The lecturer visited the same place once more for the same purpose. Another social cup after the lecture, and a second meeting with the distinguished lady. "You are constantly going from place to place," she said—"Yes," he answered, "I am like the Huma,"—and finished the sentence as before.

What horrors, when it flashed over him that he had made this fine speech, word for word, twice over! Yet it was not true, as the lady might perhaps have fairly inferred, that he had embellished his conversation with the Huma daily during that whole interval of years. On the contrary, he had never once thought of the odious fowl until the recurrence of precisely the same circumstances brought up precisely the same idea. He ought to have been proud of the accuracy of his mental adjustments. Given certain factors, and a sound brain should always evolve the same fixed product with the certainty of Babbage's calculating machine.⁴³

—What a satire, by the way, is that machine on the mere mathematician! A Frankenstein-monster, a thing without brains and without heart, too stupid to make a blunder; which turns out results like a corn-sheller, and never grows any wiser or better, though it grind a thousand bushels of them!

⁴² Holmes has this note on the *littérature* ("literary woman") incident: "It was an agreeable incident of two consecutive visits to Hartford, Conn., that I met there the late Mrs. Sigourney. The second meeting recalled the first, and with it the allusion to the Huma, which bird is the subject of a short poem by another New England authoress, which may be found in Mr. Griswold's collection."

⁴³ Charles Babbage (1792-1871), mathematician, tried unsuccessfully to make a calculating machine.

I have an immense respect for a man of talents *plus* "the mathematics." But the calculating power alone should seem to be the least human of qualities, and to have the smallest amount of reason in it; since a machine can be made to do the work of three or four calculators, and better than any one of them. Sometimes I have been troubled that I had not a deeper intuitive apprehension of the relations of numbers. But the triumph of the ciphering hand-organ has consoled me. I always fancy I can hear ¹⁰ the wheels clicking in a calculator's brain. The power of dealing with numbers is a kind of "detached lever" arrangement, which may be put into a mighty poor watch. I suppose it is about as common as the power of moving the ears voluntarily, which is a moderately rare endowment.

—Little localized powers, and little narrow streaks of specialized knowledge, are things men are very apt to be conceited about. Nature is very wise; but for this encouraging principle how many small talents ²⁰ and little accomplishments would be neglected! Talk about conceit as much as you like, it is to human character what salt is to the ocean; it keeps it sweet, and renders it endurable. Say rather it is like the natural unguent of the sea-fowl's plumage, which enables him to shed the rain that falls on him and the wave in which he dips. When one has had *all* his conceit taken out of him, when he has lost *all* his illusions, his feathers will soon soak through, and he will fly no more.

"So you admire conceited people, do you?" said the young lady who has come to the city to be finished off for—the duties of life.

I am afraid you do not study logic at your school, my dear. It does not follow that I wish to be pickled in brine because I like a salt-water plunge at Nahant.⁴⁴ I say that conceit is just as natural a thing to human minds as a centre is to a circle. But little-minded people's thoughts move in such small circles that five minutes' conversation gives you an arc long ⁴⁰ enough to determine their whole curve. An arc in the movement of a large intellect does not sensibly differ from a straight line. Even if it have the third vowel as its centre, it does not soon betray it. The highest thought, that is, is the most seemingly impersonal; it does not obviously imply any individual centre.

Audacious self-esteem, with good ground for it, is

⁴⁴ Summer resort in Massachusetts.

always imposing. What resplendent beauty that must have been which could have authorized Phryne to "peel" in the way she did! ⁴⁵ What fine speeches are those two: "*Non omnis moriar*," ⁴⁶ and "I have taken all knowledge to be my province"! ⁴⁷ Even in common people, conceit has the virtue of making them cheerful; the man who thinks his wife, his baby, his house, his horse, his dog, and himself severally unequalled, is almost sure to be a good-humored person, though liable to be tedious at times.

—What are the great faults of conversation? Want of ideas, want of words, want of manners, are the principal ones, I suppose you think. I don't doubt it, but I will tell you what I have found spoil more good talks than anything else;—long arguments on special points between people who differ on the fundamental principles upon which these points depend. No men can have satisfactory relations with each other until they have agreed on certain *ultima* of belief not to be disturbed in ordinary conversation, and unless they have sense enough to trace the secondary questions depending upon these ultimate beliefs to their source. In short, just as a written constitution is essential to the best social order, so a code of finalities is a necessary condition of profitable talk between two persons. Talking is like playing on the harp; there is as much in laying the hand on the strings to stop their vibrations as in twanging them to bring out their music.

—Do you mean to say the pun-question is not clearly settled in your minds? Let me lay down the law upon the subject. Life and language are alike sacred. Homicide and *verbicide*—that is, violent treatment of a word with fatal results to its legitimate meaning, which is its life—are alike forbidden. Manslaughter, which is the meaning of the one, is the same as man's laughter, which is the end of the other. A pun is *primâ facie* an insult to the person you are talking with. It implies utter indifference to or sublime contempt for his remarks, no matter how serious. I speak of total depravity, and one says all that is written on the subject is deep raving. I have committed my self-respect by talking with such a person.

⁴⁵ According to legend, Phryne, a beautiful Athenian courtesan supposed to have been the model for statues of Aphrodite, was tried on a capital charge and gained acquittal by uncovering her bosom before the jury.

⁴⁶ "I shall not wholly die," Horace, *Odes* III, xxx, 6.

⁴⁷ Francis Bacon in a letter to Lord Burleigh about his system of philosophy.

I should like to commit him, but cannot, because he is a nuisance. Or I speak of geological convulsions, and he asks me what was the cosine of Noah's ark, also, whether the Deluge was not a deal huger than any modern inundation.

A pun does not commonly justify a blow in return. But if a blow were given for such a cause, and death ensued, the jury would be judges both of the facts and of the pun, and might, if the latter were of an aggravated character, return a verdict of justifiable homicide. Thus, in a case lately decided before Miller, J.,⁴⁸ Doe presented Roe a subscription paper, and urged the claims of suffering humanity. Roe replied by asking, "When charity was like a top?" It was in evidence that Doe preserved a dignified silence. Roe then said, "When it begins to hum?" Doe then—and not till then—struck Roe, and his head happening to hit a bound volume of the *Monthly Rag-Bag and Stolen Miscellany*, intense mortification ensued, with a fatal result. The chief laid down his notions of the law to his brother justices, who unanimously replied, "Jest so?" The chief rejoined, that no man should jest so without being punished for it, and charged for the prisoner, who was acquitted, and the pun ordered to be burned by the sheriff. The bound volume was forfeited as a deodand, but not claimed.

People that make puns are like wanton boys that put coppers on the railroad tracks. They amuse themselves and other children, but their little trick may upset a freight train of conversation for the sake of a battered witticism.

I will thank you, B. F., to bring down two books, of which I will mark the places on this slip of paper. (While he is gone, I may say that this boy, our landlady's youngest, is called BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, after the celebrated philosopher of that name. A highly mented compliment.)

I wished to refer to two eminent authorities. Now be so good as to listen. The great moralist⁴⁹ says, "To trifle with the vocabulary which is the vehicle of social intercourse is to tamper with the currency of human intelligence. He who would violate the sanctities of his mother tongue would invade the recesses

⁴⁸ Punning allusion to *Joe Miller's Jest Book*, compiled by John Mottley.

⁴⁹ Presumably Samuel Johnson, but the quotation seems to be spurious.

⁵⁰ Saturn ate all his children except one.

⁵¹ Cf. Numbers xx1 33.

of the paternal till without remorse, and repeat the banquet of Saturn⁵⁰ without an indigestion."

And, once more, listen to the historian. "The Puritans hated puns. The Bishops were notoriously addicted to them. The Lords Temporal carried them to the verge of license. Majesty itself must have its Royal quibble. 'Ye be burly, my Lord of Burleigh,' said Queen Elizabeth, 'but ye shall make less stir in our realm than my Lord of Leicester.' The gravest wisdom and the highest breeding lent their sanction to the practice. Lord Bacon playfully declared himself a descendant of 'Og, the King of Bashan.'⁵¹ Sir Philip Sidney, with his last breath, reproached the soldier who brought him water, for wasting a casque full upon a dying man. A courtier, who saw Othello performed at the Globe Theatre, remarked, that the blackamoor was a brute, and not a man. 'Thou hast reason,' replied a great Lord, 'according to Plato his saying, for this be a two-legged animal *with feathers*.'⁵² The fatal habit became universal. The language was corrupted. The infection spread to the national conscience. Political double-dealings naturally grew out of verbal double meanings. The teeth of the new dragon were sown by the Cadmus⁵³ who introduced the alphabet of equivocation. What was levity in the time of the Tudors grew to regicide and revolution in the age of the Stuarts."

Who was that boarder that just whispered something about the Macaulay-flowers of literature?—There was a dead silence—I said calmly, I shall henceforth consider any interruption by a pun as a hint to change my boarding-house. Do not plead my example. If I have used any such, it has been only as a Spartan father⁵⁴ would show up a drunken helot.⁵⁵ We have done with them.

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What do you think of these verses,⁵⁶ my friends?—Is that piece an impromptu? said my landlady's daughter. (Act 19. Tender-eyed blonde. Long ringlets. Cameo pin. Gold pencil-case on a chain. Locket. Bracelet. Album. Autograph book. Accordeon. Reads

⁵² Othello smothered Desdemona with a pillow, presumably of feathers.

⁵³ Cadmus, a Phœnician prince, slew a dragon, and sowed its teeth, from which sprang armed men who fought until only five were left. They, with Cadmus, were said to have founded Thebes. Cadmus also reputedly introduced the Greek alphabet.

⁵⁴ The Spartans were noted for their rigorous discipline.

⁵⁵ In Sparta the *helots* were the serfs, or lowest social class.

⁵⁶ The poem, "Album Verses," is omitted here.

Byron, Tupper,⁵⁷ and Sylvanus Cobb, Junior,⁵⁸ while her mother makes the puddings. Says "Yes?" when you tell her anything.)—*Oui et non, ma petite*.—Yes and no, my child. Five of the seven verses were written off-hand; the other two took a week. . . .

I did not address the following remark to her, and I trust, from her limited range of reading, she will never see it; I said it softly to my next neighbor.

When a young female wears a flat circular side-curl, gummed on each temple,—when she walks with a male, not arm in arm, but his arm against the back of hers,—and when she says "Yes?" with the note of interrogation, you are generally safe in asking her what wages she gets, and who the "feller" was you saw her with.

"What were you whispering?" said the daughter of the house, moistening her lips, as she spoke, in a very engaging manner.

"I was only laying down a principle of social diagnosis."

"Yes?"

—It is curious to see how the same wants and tastes find the same implements and modes of expression in all times and places. . . .

—We are the Romans of the modern world,—the great assimilating people. Conflicts and conquests are of course necessary accidents with us, as with our prototypes. And so we come to their style of weapon. Our army sword is the short, stiff, pointed *gladius* of the Romans; and the American bowie-knife is the same tool, modified to meet the daily wants of civil society. I announce at this table an axiom not to be found in Montesquieu⁵⁹ or the journals of Congress:—

The race that shortens its weapons lengthens its boundaries.

Corollary. It was the Polish *lance* that left Poland at last with nothing of her own to bound.

Dropped from her nerveless grasp the *shattered spear!*⁶⁰

What business had Sarmatia⁶¹ to be fighting for liberty with a fifteen-foot pole between her and the

breasts of her enemies? If she had but clutched the old Roman and young American weapon, and come to close quarters, there might have been a chance for her; but it would have spoiled the best passage in "The Pleasures of Hope."

—Self-made men?—Well, yes. Of course every body likes and respects self-made men. It is a great deal better to be made in that way than not to be made at all. Are any of you younger people old enough to remember that Irishman's house on the marsh at Cambridgeport, which house he built from drain to chimney-top with his own hands? It took him a good many years to build it, and one could see that it was a little out of plumb, and a little wavy in outline, and a little queer and uncertain in general aspect. A regular hand could certainly have built a better house; but it was a very good house for a "self-made" carpenter's house, and people praised it, and said how remarkably well the Irishman had succeeded. They never thought of praising the fine blocks of houses a little farther on.

Your self-made man, whittled into shape with his own jackknife, deserves more credit, if that is all, than the regular engine-turned article, shaped by the most approved pattern, and French-polished by society and travel. But as to saying that one is every way the equal of the other, that is another matter. The right of strict social discrimination of all things and persons, according to their merits, native or acquired, is one of the most precious republican privileges. I take the liberty to exercise it when I say that, *other things being equal*, in most relations of life I prefer a man of family.

What do I mean by a man of family?—O, I'll give you a general idea of what I mean. Let us give him a first-rate fit out; it costs us nothing.

Four or five generations of gentlemen and gentlewomen; among them a member of his Majesty's Council for the Province, a Governor or so, one or two Doctors of Divinity, a member of Congress, not later than the time of long boots with tassels.

Family portraits. The member of the Council, by Smibert.⁶² The great merchant-uncle, by Copley,⁶³ full length, sitting in his arm-chair, in a velvet cap and flowered robe, with a globe by him, to show the range of his commercial transactions. and letters with large red seals lying round, one directed con-

⁵⁷ Martin F. Tupper (1810–88), wrote *Proverbial Philosophy* in doggerel verse, popular in the middle of the nineteenth century.

⁵⁸ Sylvanus Cobb, Jr. (1823–87), author of numerous, widely circulated, sentimental romances.

⁵⁹ Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu (1689–1755), French lawyer, man of letters, and political philosopher.

⁶⁰ "The Pleasures of Hope," by Thomas Campbell.

⁶¹ Poland.

⁶² John Smibert (1688–1751), early American portrait painter.

⁶³ John Singleton Copley (1738–1815).

spicuously to The Honorable, etc., etc. Great-grand-mother, by the same artist. brown satin, lace very fine, hands superlative, grand old lady, stuffish, but imposing. Her mother, artist unknown, flat, angular, hanging sleeves, parrot on fist. A pair of Stuarts,⁶⁴ viz., 1. A superb, full-blown, mediæval gentleman, with a fiery dash of Tory blood in his veins, tempered down with that of a fine old rebel grandmother, and warmed up with the best of old India Madeira, his face is one flame of ruddy sunshine, his ruffled shirt rushes out of his bosom with an impetuous generosity, as if it would drag his heart after it, and his smile is good for twenty thousand dollars to the Hospital, besides ample bequests to all relatives and dependants. 2. Lady of the same, remarkable cap, high waist, as in time of Empire, bust à la *Josephine*,⁶⁵ wisps of curls, like celery-tips, at sides of forehead, complexion clear and warm, like rose-cordial. As for the miniatures by Malbone,⁶⁶ we don't count them in the gallery.

Books, too, with the names of old college-students in them,—family names,—you will find them at the head of their respective classes in the days when students took rank on the catalogue from their parents' condition. Elzevirs,⁶⁷ with the Latinized appellations of youthful progenitors, and *Hic liber est meus*⁶⁸ on the title-page. A set of Hogarth's⁶⁹ original plates. Pope, original edition, 15 volumes, London, 1717. Barrow⁷⁰ on the lower shelves, in folio. Tillotson⁷¹ on the upper, in a little dark platoon of octo-30 decimos.

Some family silver, a string of wedding and funeral rings, the arms of the family curiously blazoned, the same in worsted by a maiden aunt.

If the man of family has an old place to keep these things in, furnished with claw-footed chairs and black mahogany tables, and tall bevel-edged mirrors, and stately upright cabinets, his outfit is complete.

No, my friends, I go (always, other things being equal) for the man who inherits family traditions 40

and the cumulative humanities of at least four or five generations. Above all things, as a child, he should have tumbled about in a library. All men are afraid of books, who have not handled them from infancy. Do you suppose our dear *didascalos*?⁷² over there ever read *Poli Synopsis*,⁷³ or consulted *Castelli Lexicon*,⁷⁴ while he was growing up to their stature? Not he, but virtue⁷⁵ passed through the hem of their parchment and leather garments whenever he touched them, as the precious drugs sweated through the bat's handle in the Arabian story. I tell you he is at home wherever he smells the invigorating fragrance of Russia leather. No self-made man feels so. One may, it is true, have all the antecedents I have spoken of, and yet be a boor or a shabby fellow. One may have none of them, and yet be fit for councils and courts. Then let them change places. Our social arrangement has this great beauty, that its stia shift up and down as they change specific gravity, without 20 being clogged by layers of prescription. But I still insist on my democratic liberty of choice, and I go for the man with the gallery of family portraits against the one with the twenty-five-cent daguerreotype, unless I find out that the last is the better of the two. . . .

[FROM X]

My First Walk with the Schoolmistress

This is the shortest way,—she said, as we came to a corner—Then we won't take it,—said I—The schoolmistress laughed a little, and said she was ten minutes early, so she could go round.

We walked under Mr. Paddock's row of English elms.* The gray squirrels were out looking for their breakfasts, and one of them came toward us in light, soft, intermittent leaps, until he was close to the rail of the burial-ground. He was on a grave with a broad blue-slate-stone at its head, and a shrub growing on it. The stone said this was the grave of a young man who was the son of an Honorable gentleman, and who died a hundred years ago and more—

* "Mr Paddock's row of English elms" has gone, but "Poor Benjamin" lies under the same stone the schoolmistress saw through the iron rails.

⁷² "Teacher"—allusion to James Russell Lowell, at that time Minister to England.

⁷³ Matthew Poole's *Synopsis Criticorum Aliorumque Sacrae Scripturae*, London, 1669-76.

⁷⁴ Bartolommeo Castelli's *Lexicon medicum Graeco-Latinum*, Leipzig, 1713.

⁷⁵ Cf. Mark v 27-28.

⁶⁴ Charles Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828), with Copley the best early portrait artist in America, recognized at home and abroad.

⁶⁵ Napoleon married Josephine de Beauharnais in 1796.

⁶⁶ Edward G. Malbone (1777-1807), American painter of miniature portraits.

⁶⁷ Famous editions of classics printed in Holland.

⁶⁸ "This book is mine," or "My book."

⁶⁹ William Hogarth (1697-1764), English painter and engraver.

⁷⁰ Isaac Barrow (1630-77), English theologian.

⁷¹ John Tillotson (1630-94), Archbishop of Canterbury, famous writer of sermons.

Oh, yes, *died*,—with a small triangular mark in one breast, and another smaller opposite, in his back, where another young man's rapier had slid through his body; and so he lay down out there on the Common, and was found cold the next morning, with the night-dews and the death-dews mingled on his forehead.

Let us have one look at poor Benjamin's grave,—said I.—His bones lie where his body was laid so long ago, and where the stone says they lie,—which is more than can be said of most of the tenants of this and several other burial-grounds. . . .⁷⁶

Stop before we turn away, and breathe a woman's sigh over poor Benjamin's dust. Love killed him, I think. Twenty years old, and out there fighting another young fellow on the Common, in the cool of that old July evening;—yes, there must have been love at the bottom of it.

The schoolmistress dropped a rosebud she had in her hand, through the rails, upon the grave of Benjamin Woodbridge. That was all her comment upon what I told her.—How women love Love! said I;—but she did not speak.

We came opposite the head of a place or court running eastward from the main street.—Look down there,—I said,—My friend, the Professor, lived in that house at the left hand, next the further corner, for years and years. He died out of it, the other day.—Died?—said the schoolmistress.—Certainly.—said I.—We die out of houses, just as we die out of our bodies. A commercial smash kills a hundred men's houses for them, as a railroad crash kills their mortal frames and drives out the immortal tenants. Men sicken of houses until at last they quit them, as the soul leaves its body when it is tired of its infirmities. The body has been called "the house we live in"; the house is quite as much the body we live in. Shall I tell you some things the Professor said the other day?—Do!—said the schoolmistress.

A man's body,—said the Professor,—is whatever is occupied by his will and his sensibility. The small room down there, where I wrote those papers you remember reading, was much more a portion of my body than a paralytic's senseless and motionless arm or leg is of his.

The soul of a man has a series of concentric envelopes round it, like the core of an onion, or the

innermost of a nest of boxes. First, he has his natural garment of flesh and blood. Then, his artificial integuments, with their true skin of solid stuffs, their cuticle of lighter tissues, and their variously-tinted pigments. Thirdly, his domicile, be it a single chamber or a stately mansion. And then, the whole visible world, in which Time buttons him up as in a loose outside wrapper.

You shall observe,—the Professor said,—for, like Mr. John Hunter⁷⁷ and other great men, he brings in that *shall* with great effect sometimes,—you shall observe that a man's clothing or series of envelopes does after a certain time mould itself upon his individual nature. We know this of our hats, and are always reminded of it when we happen to put them on wrong side foremost. We soon find that the beaver is a hollow cast of the skull, with all its irregular bumps and depressions. Just so all that clothes a man, even to the blue sky which caps his head,—a little loosely,—shapes itself to fit each particular being beneath it. Farmers, sailors, astronomers, poets, lovers, condemned criminals, all find it different, according to the eyes with which they severally look.

But our houses shape themselves palpably on our inner and outer natures. See a householder breaking up and you will be sure of it. There is a shell-fish which builds all manner of smaller shells into the walls of its own. A house is never a home until we have crusted it with the spoils of a hundred lives besides those of our own past. See what these are and you can tell what the occupant is.

I had no idea,—said the Professor,—until I pulled up my domestic establishment the other day, what an enormous quantity of roots I had been making during the years I was planted there. Why, there wasn't a nook or a corner that some fibre had not worked its way into; and when I gave the last wrench, each of them seemed to shriek like a mandrake as it broke its hold and came away.

There is nothing that happens, you know, which must not inevitably, and which does not actually, photograph itself in every conceivable aspect and in all dimensions. The infinite galleries of the Past await but one brief process and all their pictures will be called out and fixed forever. We had a curious illustration of the great fact on a very humble scale. When a certain bookcase, long standing in one place, for which it was built, was removed, there was the

⁷⁶ A long parenthetical paragraph on "Vandalism," or "the uprooting of ancient gravestones," is omitted here.

⁷⁷ John Hunter (1728-93), surgeon and anatomist.

exact image on the wall of the whole, and of many of its portions. But in the midst of this picture was another,—the precise outline of a map which had hung on the wall before the bookcase was built. We had all forgotten everything about the map until we saw its photograph on the wall. Then we remembered it, as some day or other we may remember a sin which has been built over and covered up, when this lower universe is pulled away from before the wall of Infinity, where the wrong-doing stands self-re-

The Professor lived in that house a long time—not twenty years, but pretty near it. When he entered that door, two shadows glided over the threshold, five lingered in the doorway when he passed through it for the last time,—and one of the shadows was claimed by its owner to be longer than his own. What changes he saw in that quiet place! Death rained through every roof but his, children came into life, grew to maturity, wedded, faded away, threw themselves away, the whole drama of life was played in that stock company's theatre of a dozen houses, one of which was his, and no deep sorrow or severe calamity ever entered his dwelling. Peace be to those walls, forever,—the Professor said,—for the many pleasant years he has passed within them!

The Professor has a friend, now living at a distance, who has been with him in many of his changes of place, and who follows him in imagination with tender interest wherever he goes.—In that little court, where he lived in gay loneliness so long,—

—in his autumnal sojourn by the Connecticut, where it comes loitering down from its mountain fastnesses like a great lord, swallowing up the small proprietary rivulets very quietly as it goes, until it gets proud and swollen and wantons in huge luxurious oxbows about the fair Northampton meadows, and at last overflows the oldest inhabitant's memory in profligate freshets at Hartford and all along its lower shores,—up in that caravansary on the banks of the stream where Ledyard⁷⁸ launched his log canoe, and the jovial old Colonel used to lead the Commencement processions,—where blue Ascutney looked down from the far distance, and the hills of Beulah,⁷⁹ as the Professor always called them, rolled up the opposite horizon in soft climbing masses, so

suggestive of the Pilgrim's Heavenward Path that he used to look through his old "Dollond"⁸⁰ to see if the Shining Ones were not within range of sight,—sweet visions, sweetest in those Sunday walks which carried them by the peaceful Common, through the solemn village lying in cataleptic stillness under the shadow of the rod of Moses, to the terminus of their harmless stroll,—the patulous fage,⁸¹ in the Professor's classic dialect,—the spreading beech, in more familiar phrase,—[stop and breathe here a moment, for the sentence is not done yet, and we have another long journey before us,]—

—and again once more up among those other hills that shut in the amber-flowing Housatonic,—dark stream, but clear, like the lucid orbs that shine beneath the lids of auburn-haired, sherry-wine-eyed demi-blondes,—in the home overlooking the winding stream and the smooth, flat meadow, looked down upon by wild hills, where the tracks of bears and catamounts may yet sometimes be seen upon the winter snow; facing the twin summits which rise in the far North, the highest waves of the great land-storm in all this billowy region,—suggestive to mad fancies of the breasts of a half-buned Titaness, stretched out by a stray thunderbolt, and hastily hidden away beneath the leaves of the forest,—in that home where seven blessed summers were passed, which stand in memory like the seven golden candlesticks in the beatific vision of the holy dreamer,⁸²—

—in that modest dwelling we were just looking at, not glorious, yet not unlovely in the youth of its drab and mahogany,—full of great and little boys' playthings from top to bottom,—in all these summer or winter nests he was always at home and always welcome.

This long articulated sigh of reminiscences,—this calenture which shows me the maple-shadowed plains of Berkshire and the mountain-circled green of Grafton beneath the salt waves which come feeling their way along the wall at my feet, restless and soft-touching as blind men's busy fingers,—is for that friend of mine * who looks into the waters of the Patapsco

* [Joseph Roby] "once a fellow-teacher with me in the Medical School of Dartmouth College, afterwards professor in the University of Maryland."

⁸⁰ Spectacles, from the Dollond family, English optical inventors.

⁸¹ Vergil's first Eclogue, l. 1.

⁸² Holmes spent the summers of 1849-56 on a farm near Pittsfield where his great-grandfather, Jacob Wendell, had bought.

⁷⁸ John Ledyard (1751-88), American traveller.

⁷⁹ Cf. Isaiah lxii 4, "Beulah land," meaning Heaven, also familiar in a church hymn.

and sees beneath them the same visions which paint themselves for me in the green depths of the Charles.

—Did I talk all this off to the schoolmistress?—Why, no,—of course not. I have been talking with you, the reader, for the last ten minutes. You don't think I should expect any woman to listen to such a sentence as that long one, without giving her a chance to put in a word?

—What did I say to the schoolmistress?—Permit me one moment. I don't doubt your delicacy and good-breeding; but in this particular case, as I was

allowed the privilege of walking alone with a very interesting young woman, you must allow me to remark, in the classic version of a familiar phrase, used by our Master Benjamin Franklin, it is *nullum tui negotii*.⁸³

When the schoolmistress and I reached the school-room door, the damask roses I spoke of were so much heightened in color by exercise that I felt sure it would be useful to her to take a stroll like this every morning, and made up my mind I would ask her to let me join her again.

FROM

*Elsie Venner*⁸⁴

A Second Preface

This is the story which a dear old lady, my very good friend, spoke of as "a medicated novel," and quite properly refused to read. I was always pleased with her discriminating criticism. It is a medicated novel, and if she wished to read for mere amusement and helpful recreation there was no need of troubling herself with a story written with a different end in view.

This story has called forth so many curious inquiries that it seems worth while to answer the more important questions which have occurred to its readers.

In the first place, it is not based on any well-ascertained physiological fact. There are old fables about patients who have barked like dogs or crowed like cocks, after being bitten or wounded by those animals. There is nothing impossible in the idea that Romulus and Remus⁸⁵ may have imbibed wolfish traits of character from the wet nurse the legend assigned them, but the legend is not sound history, and the supposition is nothing more than a speculative fancy. Still, there is a limbo of curious evidence bearing on the subject of pre-natal influences sufficient to form the starting-point of an imaginative composition.

⁸³ "None of your affair."

⁸⁴ First appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1860, to April, 1861, under the title "The Professor's Story." Published in book form, *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny*, Boston, 1861.

⁸⁵ According to legend, the founders of Rome; Romulus and his brother Remus were suckled by a wolf.

The real aim of the story was to test the doctrine of "original sin" and human responsibility for the disordered volition coming under that technical denomination. Was Elsie Venner, poisoned by the venom of a crotalus⁸⁶ before she was born, morally responsible for the "volitional" aberrations, which translated into acts become what is known as sin, and, it may be, what is punished as crime? If, on presentation of the evidence, she becomes by the verdict of the human conscience a proper object of divine pity and not of divine wrath, as a subject of moral poisoning, wherein lies the difference between her position at the bar of judgment, human or divine, and that of the unfortunate victim who received a moral poison from a remote ancestor before he drew his first breath?

It might be supposed that the character of Elsie Venner was suggested by some of the fabulous personages of classical or mediæval story. I remember that a French critic spoke of her as *cette pauvre Mélusine*.⁸⁷ I ought to have been ashamed, perhaps, but I had not the slightest idea who Melusina was until I hunted up the story, and found that she was a fairy, who for some offence was changed every Saturday to a serpent from her waist downward. I was of course familiar with Keats's Lamia, another imaginary being, the subject of magical transformation into a serpent. My story was well advanced before Hawthorne's wonderful "Marble Faun," which might be thought to have furnished me with the hint of a

⁸⁶ Rattlesnake.

⁸⁷ "That poor Melusina." The critic is not identified.

mixed nature,—human, with an alien element,—was published or known to me. So that my poor heroine found her origin, not in fable or romance, but in a physiological conception fertilized by a theological dogma.

I had the dissatisfaction of enjoying from a quiet corner a well-meant effort to dramatize "Elsie Venner." Unfortunately, a physiological romance, as I knew beforehand, is hardly adapted for the melodramatic efforts of stage representation. I can therefore say, with perfect truth, that I was not disappointed. It is to the mind, and not to the senses, that such a story must appeal, and all attempts to render the character and events objective on the stage, or to make them real by artistic illustrations, are almost of necessity failures. The story has won the attention and enjoyed the favor of a limited class of readers, and if it still continues to interest others of the same tastes and habits of thought I can ask nothing more of it.

January 23, 1883

CHAPTER I

The Brahmin Caste of New England

There is nothing in New England corresponding at all to the feudal aristocracies of the Old World. Whether it be owing to the stock from which we were derived, or to the practical working of our institutions, or to the abrogation of the technical "law of honor," which draws a sharp line between the personally responsible class of "gentlemen" and the unnamed multitude of those who are not expected to risk their lives for an abstraction,—whatever be the cause, we have no such aristocracy here as that which grew up out of the military systems of the Middle Ages.

What we mean by "aristocracy" is merely the richer part of the community, that live in the tallest houses, drive real carriages, (not "kerndges,") kid-glove their hands, and French-bonnet their ladies' heads, give parties where the persons who call them by the above title are not invited, and have a provokingly easy way of dressing, walking, talking, and nodding to people, as if they felt entirely at home, and would not be embarrassed in the least, if they met the Governor, or even the President of the United States, face to face. Some of these great folks

are really well-bred, some of them are only purposeful and assuming,—but they form a class, and are named as above in the common speech.

It is in the nature of large fortunes to diminish rapidly, when subdivided and distributed. A million is the unit of wealth, now and here in America. It splits into four handsome properties, each of these into four good inheritances, these, again, into scanty competences for four ancient maidens,—with whom it is best the family should die out, unless it can begin again as its great-grandfather did. Now a million is a kind of golden cheese, which represents in a compendious form the summer's growth of a fat meadow of craft or commerce, and as this kind of meadow rarely bears more than one crop, it is pretty certain that sons and grandsons will not get another golden cheese out of it, whether they milk the same cows or turn in new ones. In other words, the millionocracy, considered in a large way, is not at all an affair of persons and families, but a perpetual fact of money with a variable human element, which a philosopher might leave out of consideration without falling into serious error. Of course, this trivial and fugitive fact of personal wealth does not create a permanent class, unless some special means are taken to arrest the process of disintegration in the third generation. This is so rarely done, at least successfully, that one need not live a very long life to see most of the rich families he knew in childhood more or less reduced, and the millions shifted into the hands of the country-boys who were sweeping stores and carrying parcels when the now decayed gentry were driving their chariots, eating their venison over silver chafing-dishes, drinking Madeira chilled in embossed coolers, wearing their hair in powder, and casing their legs in long boots with silken tassels.

There is, however, in New England, an aristocracy, if you choose to call it so, which has a far greater character of permanence. It has grown to be a *caste*,—not in any odious sense,—but, by the repetition of the same influences, generation after generation, it has acquired a distinct organization and physiognomy, which not to recognize is more stupidity, and not to be willing to describe would show a distrust of the good-nature and intelligence of our readers, who like to have us see all we can and tell all we see.

If you will look carefully at any class of students

in one of our colleges, you will have no difficulty in selecting specimens of two different aspects of youthful manhood. Of course I shall choose extreme cases to illustrate the contrast between them. In the first, the figure is perhaps robust, but often otherwise,—inellegant, partly from careless attitudes, partly from ill-dressing,—the face is uncouth in feature, or at least common,—the mouth coarse and unformed,—the eye unsympathetic, even if bright,—the movements of the face are clumsy, like those of the limbs,—the voice is unmusical,—and the enunciation as if the words were coarse castings, instead of fine carvings. The youth of the other aspect is commonly slender,—his face is smooth, and apt to be pallid,—his features are regular and of a certain delicacy,—his eye is bright and quick,—his lips play over the thought he utters as a pianist's fingers dance over their music,—and his whole air, though it may be timid, and even awkward, has nothing clownish. If you are a teacher, you know what to expect from each of these young men. With equal willingness, the first will be slow at learning; the second will take to his books as a pointer or a setter to his field-work.

The first youth is the common country-boy, whose race has been bred to bodily labor. Nature has adapted the family organization to the kind of life it has lived. The hands and feet by constant use have got more than their share of development,—the organs of thought and expression less than their share. The finer instincts are latent and must be developed. A youth of this kind is raw material in its first stage of elaboration. You must not expect too much of any such. Many of them have force of will and character, and become distinguished in practical life; but very few of them ever become great scholars. A scholar is, in a large proportion of cases, the son of scholars or scholarly persons.

That is exactly what the other young man is. He comes of the *Brahmin caste of New England*. This is the harmless, inoffensive, untitled aristocracy referred to, and which many readers will at once acknowledge. There are races of scholars among us, in which aptitude for learning, and all these marks of it I have spoken of, are congenital and hereditary. Their names are always on some college catalogue or other. They break out every generation or two in some learned labor which calls them up after they

seem to have died out. At last some newer name takes their place, it may be,—but you inquire a little and you find it is the blood of the Edwardses or the Chauncys or the Ellerys or some of the old historic scholars, disguised under the altered name of a female descendant.

There probably is not an experienced instructor anywhere in our Northern States who will not recognize at once the truth of this general distinction. But the reader who has never been a teacher will very probably object, that some of our most illustrious public men have come direct from the homespun-clad class of the people,—and he may, perhaps, even find a noted scholar or two whose parents were masters of the English alphabet, but of no other.

It is not fair to pit a few chosen families against the great multitude of those who are continually working their way up into the intellectual classes. The results which are habitually reached by hereditary training are occasionally brought about without it. There are natural filters as well as artificial ones; and though the great rivers are commonly more or less turbid, if you will look long enough, you may find a spring that sparkles as no water does which drips through your apparatus of sands and sponges. So there are families which refine themselves into intellectual aptitude without having had much opportunity for intellectual acquirements. A series of felicitous crosses develops an improved strain of blood, and reaches its maximum perfection at last in the large uncombed youth who goes to college and startles the hereditary class-leaders by striding past them all. That is Nature's republicanism; thank God for it, but do not let it make you illogical. The race of the hereditary scholar has exchanged a certain portion of its animal vigor for its new instincts, and it is hard to lead men without a good deal of animal vigor. The scholar who comes by Nature's special grace from an unworn stock of broad-chested sires and deep-bosomed mothers must always overmatch an equal intelligence with a compromised and lowered vitality. A man's breathing and digestive apparatus (one is tempted to add *muscular*) are just as important to him on the floor of the Senate as his thinking organs. You broke down in your great speech, did you? Yes, your grandfather had an attack of dyspepsia in '82, after working too hard on his famous Election Sermon. All this does not touch

the main fact—our scholars come chiefly from a privileged order, just as our best fruits come from well-known grafts,—though now and then a seedling apple, like the Northern Spy, or a seedling pear, like

the Seckel, springs from a nameless ancestry and grows to be the pride of all the gardens in the land . . .

1860

1861

FROM

*Mechanism in Thought and Morals*⁸⁸

The more we examine the mechanism of thought, the more we shall see that the automatic, unconscious action of the mind enters largely into all its processes. Our definite ideas are stepping-stones, how we get from one to the other, we do not know. Something carries us, we do not take the step. A¹⁰ creating and informing spirit which is with us, and not of us, is recognized everywhere in real and in storied life. It is the Zeus⁸⁹ that kindled the rage of Achilles,⁹⁰ it is the Muse of Homer, it is the Daimon⁹¹ of Socrates, it is the inspiration of the seer, it is the mocking devil that whispers to Margaret⁹² as she kneels at the altar, and the hobgoblin that cried, "Sell him, sell him!"⁹³ in the ear of John Bunyan. It shaped the forms that filled the soul of Michael Angelo when he saw the figure of the great Lawgiver⁹⁴ in the yet unhewn marble, and the dome of the world's yet unbuilt basilica against the blank horizon, it comes to the least of us, as a voice that will be heard, it tells us what we must believe, it frames our sentences, it lends a sudden gleam of sense or eloquence to the dullest of us all, so that, like Katterfelto⁹⁵ with his hair on end, we wonder at ourselves, or rather not at ourselves, but at this divine visitor, who chooses our brain as his dwelling-place, and invests our naked thought with the purple³⁰ of the kings of speech or song.

After all, the mystery of unconscious mental action

is exemplified, as I have said, in every act of mental association. What happens when one idea brings up another? Some internal movement, of which we are wholly unconscious, and which we only know by its effect. What is this action, which in Dame Quickly⁹⁶ agglutinates contiguous circumstances by their surfaces, in men of wit and fancy, connects remote ideas by partial resemblances, in men of imagination, by the vital identity which underlies phenomenal diversity, in the man of science, groups the objects of thought in sequences of maximum resemblance? Not one of them can answer. There is a Delphi⁹⁷ and a Pythoness⁹⁸ in every human breast.

The poet sits down to his desk with an odd concert in his brain, and presently his eyes fill with tears, his thought slides into the minor key, and his heart is full of sad and plaintive melodies. Or he goes to his work, saying, "To-night I would have tears," and, before he rises from his table he has written a burlesque, such as he might think fit to send to one of the comic papers, if these were not so commonly cemeteries of hilarity interspersed with cenotaphs of wit and humor. These strange hysterics of the intelligence, which make us pass from weeping to laughter, and from laughter back again to weeping, must be familiar to every impressible nature, and all is as automatic, involuntary, as entirely self-evolved by a hidden organic process, as are the changing moods of the laughing and crying woman. The poet always recognizes a dictation *ab extra*; and we hardly think it a figure of speech when we talk of his inspiration.

The mental attitude of the poet while writing, if I may venture to define it, is that of the "nun breathless with adoration." Mental stillness is the first condition of the listening state, and I think my friends

⁸⁸ An address delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard University, June 29, 1870. Published in Boston, 1871. Reprinted in *Pages from an Old Volume of Life*, 1883. Holmes appended this footnote: "Matter itself has been called 'frozen force' and, as Bosovich has said, is only known to us as localized points of attraction and repulsion." The rambling introductory pages are here omitted.

⁸⁹ In Greek mythology the chief of the gods, the Roman Jupiter.

⁹⁰ Greek hero of the Trojan war, in the *Iliad*.

⁹¹ "Daemon," i.e., spirit or inspiration.

⁹² Tragic heroine in Goethe's *Faust*.

⁹³ In John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*.

⁹⁴ A famous statue of Moses in Rome, by Michelangelo, who also painted the murals in the Sistine Chapel.

⁹⁵ William Cowper, *The Task*, Book IV, l. 86.

⁹⁶ Tavern hostess, comic character in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, and *Merry Wives of Windsor*.

⁹⁷ Town in ancient Greece, seat of famous oracle, Pythian Apollo.

⁹⁸ A soothsaying spirit or demon.

the poets will recognize that the sense of effort, which is often felt, accompanies the mental spasm by which the mind is maintained in a state at once passive to the influx from without, and active in seizing only that which will serve its purpose. It is not strange that remembered ideas should often take advantage of the crowd of thoughts, and smuggle themselves in as original. Honest thinkers are always stealing unconsciously from each other. Our minds are full of waifs and estrays which we think are our own. Innocent plagiarism turns up everywhere. Our best musical critic tells me that a few notes of the air of "Shoo Fly"⁹⁹ are borrowed from a movement in one of the magnificent harmonies of Beethoven.

And so the orator,—I do not mean the poor slave of a manuscript, who takes his thought chilled and stiffened from its mould, but the impassioned speaker who pours it forth as it flows coruscating from the furnace,—the orator only becomes our master at the moment when he himself is surprised, captured, ²⁰ taken possession of, by a sudden rush of fresh inspiration. How well we know the flash of the eye, the thrill of the voice, which are the signature and symbol of nascent thought,—thought just merging into consciousness, in which condition, as is the case with the chemist's elements, it has a combining force at other times wholly unknown!

But we are all more or less improvisators. We all have a double, who is wiser and better than we are, and who puts thoughts into our heads, and words ³⁰ into our mouths. Do we not all commune with our own hearts upon our beds? Do we not all divide ourselves, and go to buffets on questions of right or wrong, of wisdom or folly? Who or what is it that resolves the stately parliament of the day, with all its forms and conventionalities and pretences, and the great Me presiding, into the committee of the whole, with Conscience in the chair, that holds its solemn session through the watches of the night? . . .

The mechanical co-efficient of mental action may ⁴⁰ be therefore considered a molecular movement in the nervous centres, attended with waste of material conveyed thither in the form of blood,—not a mere tremor like the quiver of a bell, but a process more like combustion; the blood carrying off the oxidated particles, and bringing in fresh matter to take their place.

This part of the complex process must, of course,

⁹⁹ A popular song of the time.

enter into the category of the correlated forces. The brain must be fed in order to work; and according to the amount of waste of material will be that of the food required to repair losses. So much logic, so much beef; so much poetry, so much pudding; and, as we all know that all growing things are but sponges soaked full of old sunshine, Apollo¹⁰⁰ becomes as important in the world of letters as ever.*

But the intellectual product does not belong to the category of force at all, as defined by physicists. It does not answer their definition as "that which is expended in producing or resisting motion." It is not reconvertible into other forms of force. One cannot lift a weight with a logical demonstration, or make a tea-kettle boil by writing an ode to it. A given amount of molecular action in two brains represents a certain equivalent of food, but by no means an equivalent of intellectual product. Bavius and Mævius¹⁰² were very probably as good feeders as Virgil and Horace, and wasted as much brain-tissue in producing their *carmina* as the two great masters wasted in producing theirs. It may be doubted whether the present Laureate of England¹⁰³ consumed more oxidable material in the shape of nourishment for every page of "Maud" or of "In Memoriam" than his predecessor Nahum Tate,¹⁰⁴ whose masterpiece gets no better eulogy than that it is "the least miserable of his productions," in eliminating an equal amount of verse.

As mental labor, in distinction from the passive flow of thought, implies an exercise of will, and as mental labor is shown to be attended by an increased waste, the presumption is that this waste is in some degree referable to the material requirements of the act of volition. We see why the latter should be attended by a sense of effort, and followed by a feeling of fatigue. . . .

The problem of memory is closely connected with the question of the mechanical relation between thought and structure. How intimate is the alliance

* It is curious to compare the Laptuan idea of extracting sunbeams from cucumbers¹⁰¹ with George Stephenson's famous saying about coal.

¹⁰⁰ In Greek mythology the god of music and poetry, also identified with the sun god Helios.

¹⁰¹ See *Gulliver's Travels*, Part III.

¹⁰² Inferior Latin poets, enemies of their superiors, Virgil and Horace.

¹⁰³ Alfred Tennyson.

¹⁰⁴ Nahum Tate (1692-1715) wrote a number of dramas of no permanent literary value.

of memory with the material condition of the brain, is shown by the effect of age, of disease, of a blow, of intoxication. I have known an aged person repeat the same question five, six, or seven times during the same brief visit. Everybody knows the archbishop's flavor of apoplexy in the memory as in the other mental powers. I was once asked to see to a woman who had just been injured in the street. On coming to herself, "Where am I? what has happened?" she asked. "Knocked down by a horse, ma'am, stunned a little—that is all." A pause, "while one with moderate haste might count a hundred," and then again, "Where am I? what has happened?"—"Knocked down by a horse, ma'am, stunned a little—that is all." Another pause, and the same question again, and so on during the whole time I was by her. The same tendency to repeat a question indefinitely has been observed in returning members of those worshipping assemblies whose favorite hymn is, "We won't go home till morning."

Is memory, then, a material record? Is the brain, like the rocks of the Sinaitic Valley,¹⁰⁵ written all over with inscriptions left by the long caravans of thought, as they have passed year after year through its mysterious recesses?

When we see a distant railway-train sliding by us in the same line, day after day, we infer the existence of a track which guides it. So, when some dear old friend begins that story we remember so well, switching off at the accustomed point of digression, coming to a dead stop at the puzzling question of chronology, off the track on the matter of its being first or second cousin of somebody's aunt, set on it again by the patient, listening wife, who knows it all as she knows her well-worn wedding-ring,—how can we doubt that there is a track laid down for the story in some permanent disposition of the thinking-marrow?

I need not say that no microscope can find the tablet inscribed with the names of early loves, the stains left by tears of sorrow or contrition, the rent where the thunderbolt of passion has fallen, or any legible token that such experiences have formed a part of the life of the mortal, the vacant temple of whose thought it is exploring. It is only as an inference, aided by an illustration which I will presently offer, that I suggest the possible existence, in the very substance of the brain-tissue, of those inscrip-

tions which Shakespeare must have thought of when he wrote,—

Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain.¹⁰⁶

The objection to the existence of such a material record—that we renew our bodies many scores of times, and yet retain our earliest recollections—is entirely met by the fact, that a scar of any kind holds its own pretty nearly through life in spite of all these same changes, as we have not far to look to find instances.

It must be remembered that a billion of the starry brain-cells could be packed in a cubic inch, and that the convolutions contain one hundred and thirty-four cubic inches, according to the estimate already given. My illustration is derived from microscopic photography. I have a glass slide on which is a minute photographic picture, which is exactly covered when the head of a small pin is laid upon it. In that little speck are clearly to be seen, by a proper magnifying power, the following objects: the Declaration of Independence, with easily-recognized facsimile autographs of all the signers, the arms of all the original thirteen States, the Capitol at Washington, and very good portraits of all the Presidents of the United States from Washington to Polk. These objects are all distinguishable as a group with a power of fifty diameters. With a power of three hundred, any one of them becomes a sizable picture. You may see, if you will, the majesty of Washington on his noble features, or the will of Jackson in those hard lines of the long face, crowned with that bristling head of hair in a perpetual state of electrical divergence and centrifugal self-assertion. Remember that each of these faces is the record of a life.

Now recollect that there was an interval between the exposure of the negative in the camera and its development by pouring a wash over it, when all these pictured objects existed potentially, but absolutely invisible, and incapable of recognition, in a speck of collodion-film, which a pin's head would cover, and then think what Alexandrian libraries, what Congressional document-loads of positively intelligible characters,—such as one look of the recording angel would bring out, many of which we can ourselves develop at will, or which come before our eyes unbidden, like "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Up-

¹⁰⁵ Allusion to the Mosaic laws written on the stones of a mountain in the Sinaitic Peninsula.

¹⁰⁶ *Macbeth* V, iii, ll 41-42.

harsin,"¹⁰⁷—might be held in those convolutions of the brain which wrap the talent intrusted to us, too often as the folded napkin of the slothful servant hid the treasure his master had lent him!

Three facts, so familiar that I need only allude to them, show how much more is recorded in the memory than we may ever take cognizance of. The first is the conviction of having been in the same precise circumstances once or many times before. Dr. Wigan says, never but once; but such is not my experience.¹⁰⁸ The second is the panorama of their past lives, said, by people rescued from drowning, to have flashed before them. I had it once myself, accompanied by an ignoble ducking and scrambling self-rescue. The third is the revival of apparently obsolete impressions, of which many strange cases are related in nervous young women and in dying persons, and which the story of the dog Argus¹⁰⁸ in the "Odyssey," and of the parrot so charmingly told by Campbell, would lead us to suppose not of rare occurrence²⁰ in animals.* It is possible, therefore, and I have tried to show that it is not improbable, that memory is a material record; that the brain is scarred and seamed with infinitesimal hieroglyphics, as the features are engraved with the traces of thought and passion. And, if this is so, must not the record, we ask, perish with the organ? Alas! how often do we see it perish *before* the organ!—the mighty satirist tamed into oblivious imbecility; the great scholar wandering without sense of time or place among his alcoves, taking³⁰ his books one by one from the shelves, and fondly patting them; a child once more among his toys, but a child whose to-morrows come hungry, and not full-handed,—come as birds of prey in the place of the sweet singers of morning. We must all become as little children if we live long enough; but how blank an existence the wrinkled infant must carry into the kingdom of heaven, if the Power that gave him memory does not repeat the miracle by restoring it!

* "A troop of cavalry which had served on the Continent was disbanded in York. Sir Robert Clayton turned out the old horses in Knavesmire to have their run for life. One day, while grazing promiscuously and apart from each other, a storm gathered; and, when the thunder pealed and the lightning flashed, they were seen to get together, and form in line, in almost as perfect order as if they had had their old masters on their backs." Laycock, *Brit. and For. Med. Rev.* vol. xix, 309.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Daniel v:25.

¹⁰⁸ Ulysses' dog was the only creature that recognized him on his return home after his wanderings.

The connection between thought and the structure and condition of the brain is evidently so close that all we have to do is to study it. It is not in this direction that materialism is to be feared: we do not find Hamlet and Faust, right and wrong, the valor of men and the purity of women, by testing for albumen, or examining fibres in microscopes.

It is in the moral world that materialism has worked the strangest confusion. In various forms, under imposing names and aspects, it has thrust itself into the moral relations, until one hardly knows where to look for any first principles without upsetting everything in searching for them.

The moral universe includes nothing but the exercise of choice: all else is machinery. What we can help and what we cannot help are on two sides of a line which separates the sphere of human responsibility from that of the Being who has arranged and controls the order of things.

The question of the freedom of the will has been an open one, from the days of Milton's demons in conclave to the recent most noteworthy essay of Mr. Hazard,¹⁰⁹ our Rhode Island neighbor. It still hangs suspended between the seemingly exhaustive strongest motive argument and certain residual convictions. The sense that we are, to a limited extent, self-determining; the sense of effort in willing; the sense of responsibility in view of the future, and the verdict of conscience in review of the past,—all of these are open to the accusation of fallacy; but they all leave a certain undischarged balance in most minds.† We can invoke the strong arm of the *Deus ex machina*,¹¹⁰ as Mr. Hazard, and Kant and others, before him, have done. Our will may be a primary initiating cause or force, as unexplainable, as unreducible, as indecomposable, as impossible if you choose, but as real to our belief, as the *æternitas a parte ante*.¹¹¹ The

† "But, sir, as to the doctrine of necessity, no man believes it. If a man should give me arguments that I do not see, though I could not answer them, should I believe that I do not see?" Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, vol. viii. p. 331. London, 1848.

"What have you to do with liberty and necessity? or what more than to hold your tongue about it?"—Johnson to Boswell. *Ibid.* letter 396.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Robinson Hazard, Rhode Island agriculturist called "Shepherd Tom," author of *Recollections of Olden Times* (1879) and *The Johnny Cake Letters* (1882).

¹¹⁰ Literally, "god from the machine," hence any means artificially introduced as in a story to solve a difficulty.

¹¹¹ Literally, "immortality from a previous part."

divine foreknowledge is no more in the way of delegated choice than the divine omnipotence is in the way of delegated power. The Infinite can surely slip the cable of the finite if it choose so to do.

It is one thing to prove a proposition like the doctrine of necessity in terms, and another thing to accept it as an article of faith. There are cases in which I would oppose to the *credo quia impossibile est*¹¹² a paradox as bold and as serviceable,—*nego quia probatum est*¹¹³. Even Mr. Huxley,¹¹⁴ who¹⁰ throws quite as much responsibility on protoplasm as it will bear, allows that "our volition counts for something as a condition of the course of events."

I reject, therefore, the mechanical doctrine which makes me the slave of outside influences, whether it work with the logic of Edwards,¹¹⁵ or the averages of Buckle,¹¹⁶ whether it come in the shape of the Greek's destiny, or the Mahometan's fatalism, or in that other aspect, dear to the band of believers, whom Beesly of Everton, speaking in the character of John²⁰ Wesley,¹¹⁷ characterized as

The crocodile crew that believe in election.*

But I claim the right to eliminate all mechanical ideas which have crowded into the sphere of intelligent choice between right and wrong. The pound of flesh I will grant to Nemesis, but, in the name of human nature, not one drop of blood,—not one drop.

Moral chaos began with the idea of transmissible³⁰ responsibility. It seems the stalest of truisms to say that every moral act, depending as it does on choice, is in its nature exclusively personal, that its penalty, if it have any, is payable, not to bearer, not to order, but only to the creditor himself. To treat a mal-volition, which is inseparably involved with an internal condition, as capable of external transfer from one person to another, is simply to materialize it. When we can take the dimensions of virtue by triangulation, when we can literally weigh Justice in her own⁴⁰ scales, when we can speak of the specific gravity of

* Southey's *Life of Wesley*, vol. II, note 28.

¹¹² "I believe because it is impossible."

¹¹³ "I deny [do not believe] because it has been proved."

¹¹⁴ Thomas Huxley (1825-95), English scientist who championed the Darwinian theory of evolution.

¹¹⁵ Jonathan Edwards

¹¹⁶ Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-62), English historian who tried to use scientific method in writing history

¹¹⁷ John Wesley (1703-91), founder of Methodism.

truth, or the square root of honesty, when we can send a statesman his integrity in a package to Washington, if he happen to have left it behind,—then we may begin to speak of the moral character of inherited tendencies, which belong to the machinery for which the Sovereign Power alone is responsible. The misfortune of perverse instincts, which adhere to us as congenital inheritances, should go to our side of the account, if the books of heaven are kept, as the great Church of Christendom maintains they are, by double entry. But the absurdity which has been held up to ridicule in the nursery has been enforced as the highest reason upon older children. Did our forefathers tolerate *Æsop*¹¹⁸ among them? "I cannot trouble the water where you are," says the lamb to the wolf. "don't you see that I am farther down the stream?"—"But a year ago you called me ill names."—"Oh sir! a year ago I was not born."—"Sirrah," replies the wolf, "if it was not you, it was your father, and that is all one," and finishes with the usual practical application.

If a created being has no rights which his Creator is bound to respect, there is an end to all moral relations between them. Good Father Abraham¹¹⁹ thought he had, and did not hesitate to give his opinion. "Far be it from Thee," he says, to do so and so. And Pascal,¹²⁰ whose reverence amounted to theophobia,* could treat of the duties of the Supreme to the dependent being †. If we suffer for anything except our own wrong-doing, to call it punishment is like speaking of a yard of veracity or a square inch of magnanimity.

So to rate the gravity of a mal-volition by its consequences is the merest sensational materialism. A little child takes a prohibited friction-match: it kindles a conflagration with it, which burns down the house, and perishes itself in the flames. Mechanically, this child was an incendiary and a suicide, morally,

* I use this term to designate a state of mind thus described by Jeremy Taylor: "There are some persons so miserable and scrupulous, such perpetual tormentors of themselves with unnecessary fears, that their meat and drink is a snare to their consciences."

"These persons do not believe noble things of God."

† "Il y a un devoir réciproque entre Dieu et les hommes."

Quid debui? 'accusez moi,' dit Dieu dans Isaïe. Dieu doit accomplir ses promesses," etc. *Pensées*, xxiii. 3.

¹¹⁸ Reputed Greek author of *Æsop's Fables*.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Genesis xviii. 25.

¹²⁰ Blaise Pascal (1623-62), French philosopher.

neither. Shall we hesitate to speak as charitably of multitudes of weak and ignorant grown-up children, moving about on a planet whose air is a deadly poison, which kills all that breathe it four or five scores of years?

Closely allied to this is the pretence that the liabilities incurred by any act of mal-volition are to be measured on the scale of the Infinite, and not on that of the total moral capacity of the finite agent,—a mechanical application of the Oriental way of dealing with offences. The sheik or sultan chops a man's head off for a look he does not like: it is not the amount of wrong, but the importance of the personage who has been outraged. We have none of those moral relations with power, as such, which the habitual Eastern modes of speech seem to imply.

The next movement in moral materialism is to establish a kind of scale of equivalents between perverse moral choice and physical suffering. Pain often cures *ignorance*, as we know,—as when a child learns not to handle fire by burning its fingers,—but it does not change the moral nature.* Children may be whipped into obedience, but not into virtue; and it is not pretended that the penal colony of heaven has sent back a single reformed criminal. We hang men for our convenience or safety; sometimes shoot them for revenge. Thus we come to associate the infliction of injury with offences as their satisfactory settlement,—a kind of neutralization of them, as of an acid with an alkali: so that we feel as if a jarring moral universe would be all right if only suffering enough were added to it. This scheme of chemical equivalents seems to me, I confess, a worse materialism than making protoplasm master of arts and doctor of divinity.

Another mechanical notion is that which treats moral evil as bodily disease has so long been treated,—as being a distinct entity, a demon to be expelled, a load to be got rid of, instead of a condition, or the result of a condition.† But what is most singular in the case of moral disease is, that it has been forgotten

that it is a living creature in which it occurs, and that all living creatures are the subjects of natural and spontaneous healing processes. A broken vase cannot mend itself; but a broken bone can. Nature, that is, the Divinity, in his every-day working methods, will soon make it as strong as ever.

Suppose the beneficent self-healing process to have repaired the wound in the moral nature: is it never to become an honest scar, but always liable to be reopened? Is there no outlawry of an obsolete self-determination? If the President of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals impaled a fly on a pin when he was ten years old, is it to stand against him, crying for a stake through his body, *in sæcula sæculorum*?‡ The most popular hymn of Protestantism, and the “Dies Iræ”¹²¹ of Romanism, are based on this assumption: *Nil inultum remanebit*.¹²² So it is that a condition of a conscious being has been materialized into a purely inorganic brute fact,—not merely dehumanized, but deanimalized and devitalized.

Here it was that Swedenborg,¹²³ whose whole secret I will not pretend to have fully opened, though I have tried with the key of a thinker whom I love and honor,—that Swedenborg, I say, seems to have come in, if not with a new revelation, at least infusing new life into the earlier ones. *What we are* will determine the company we are to keep, and not the avoirdupois weight of our moral exuviae, strapped on our shoulders like a porter's burden.

Having once materialized the whole province of self-determination and its consequences, the next thing is, of course, to materialize the methods of avoiding these consequences. We are all, more or less, idolaters, and believers in quackery. We love specifics better than regimen, and observances better than self-government. The moment our belief di-

‡ There is no more significant evidence of natural moral evolution than the way in which children outgrow the cruelty which is so common in what we call their *tender* years.

“As ruthless as a baby with a worm;
As cruel as a schoolboy ere he grows
To pity,—more from ignorance than will.”
Tennyson, *Walking to the Mail*.

[The Latin means, “for age of ages.”]

¹²¹ “Day of Wrath.”

¹²² “Nothing will remain unavenged.”

¹²³ Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) was a renowned Swedish philosopher, mystic, theosophist, and founder of the New Church.

* “No troubles will, of themselves, work a change in a wicked heart.” Matthew Henry, *Com. on Luke*, xxiii. 29.

† “The strength of modern therapeutics lies in the clearer perception, than formerly, of the great truth, that diseases are but perverted life-processes, and have for their natural history, not only a beginning, but equally a period of culmination and decline.” *Medicine in Modern Times*. Dr. Gull's Address, p. 187.

voices itself from character, the mechanical element begins to gain upon it, and tends to its logical conclusion * in the Japanese prayer-mill ¹²⁴

Brothers of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, my slight task is finished. I have always regarded these occasions as giving an opportunity of furnishing hints for future study, rather than of exhibiting the detailed results of thought. I cannot but hope that I have thrown some ray of suggestion, or brought out some clink of questionable soundness, which will justify me for appearing with the lantern and the hammer.

The hardest and most painful task of the student of to-day is to occidentalize and modernize the Asiatic modes of thought which have come down to us closely wedded to mediæval interpretations. We are called upon to assert the rights and dignity of our humanity, if it were only that our worship might be worthy the acceptance of a wise and magnanimous Sovereign. Self-abasement is the proper sign of homage to superiors with the Oriental. The Occidental demands self-respect in his inferiors as a condition of accepting their tribute to him as of any value. The *kotou* in all its forms, the pitiful acts of *creeping, crawling, fawning, like a dog at his master's feet* (which acts are signified by the word we translate *worship*, according to the learned editor of "The Comprehensive Commentary"), † are offensive, not gratifying to him. Does not the man of science who accepts with true manly reverence the facts of Nature, in the face of all his venerated traditions, offer a more acceptable service than he who repeats the formulæ, and copies the gestures, derived from the language and customs of despots and their subjects? The attitude of modern Science is erect, her aspect serene, her determination inexorable, her onward movement unflinching, because she believes herself,

* One can easily conceive the confusion which might be wrought in young minds by such teaching as this of our excellent Thomas Shepard —

"The Paths to Hell be but two: the first is the Path of Sin, which is a dirty Way; Secondly, the Path of Duties, which (rested in) is but a cleaner Way." Quoted by Israel Longg, Pastor of the West Church in Sudbury, in *A Practical Discourse*, etc. Boston: Kneeland & Green, 1749.

However sound the doctrine, it is sure to lead to the substitution of some easy mechanical contrivance,—some rite, penance, or formula,—for perpetual and ever-renewed acts of moral self-determination.

† See note on Matthew xi. 11.

¹²⁴ Written prayers were placed on a wheel, as the wheel revolved the prayers were thought to become efficacious.

in the order of Providence, the true successor of the men of old who brought down the light of heaven to men. She has reclaimed astronomy and cosmogony, and is already laying a firm hand on anthropology, over which another battle must be fought, with the usual result, to come sooner or later. Humility may be taken for granted as existing in every sane human being, but it may be that it most truly manifests itself to-day in the readiness with which we bow to new truths as they come from the scholars, the teachers, to whom the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding. If a man should try to show it in the way good men did of old,—by covering himself with tow-cloth, sitting on an ash-heap, and disfiguring his person,—we should send him straightway to Worcester or Somerville, and if he began to "rend his garments" it would suggest the need of a strait-jacket.

Our rocky New England and old rocky Judæa always seem to have a kind of yearning for each other. Jerusalem governs Massachusetts, and Massachusetts would like to colonize Jerusalem.

"The pine-tree dreameth of the palm,
The palm-tree of the pine."

But political freedom inevitably generates a new type of religious character, as the conclave that contemplates endowing a dotard with infallibility has found out, we trust, before this time *. The American of to-day may challenge for himself the noble frankness in his highest relations which did honor to the courage of the Father of the Faithful.

And he may well ask, in view of the slavish beliefs which have governed so large a part of Christendom, whether it was an ascent or a descent from the Roman's

*Si fractus illabatur orbis
Imperium venient ruinæ* ¹²⁵

to the monk's

*Quid sum miser tunc facturus,
Quem patronum rogaturus?* ¹²⁶

* We have since discovered that the dogma was a foregone conclusion.

¹²⁵ "If the round sky should crack and fall upon him,
The wreck would strike him fearless still."

—Hæc, *Odes* III, iii, 7.

¹²⁶ "What am I, poor fellow, going to do,
Whom am I going to ask for a patron?"

Who can help asking such questions as he sits in the light of those blazing windows of the ritual *renaissance*, burning with hectic colors like the leaves of the decaying forest before the wind has swept it bare, and listens to the delicious strains of the quartet as it carols forth its smiling devotions?

Our dwellings are built on the shell-heaps, the kitchen-middens of the age of stone. Inherited beliefs, as obscure in their origin as the parentage of the cave-dwellers, are stronger with many minds than the evidence of the senses and the simplest deductions of the intelligence. Persons outside of Bedlam¹²⁷ can talk of the "dreadful depravity of lunatics,"—the sufferers whom we have learned to treat with the tenderest care, as the most to be pitied of all God's children. Mr. Gosse¹²⁸ can believe that a fossil skeleton, with the remains of food in its interior, was never part of a living creature, but was made just as we find it,*—a kind of stage-property, a clever cheat, got up by the great Manager of the original Globe Theatre.¹²⁹ All we can say of such persons is, that their "illative sense," to use Dr. Newman's¹³⁰ phrase, seems to most of us abnormal and unhealthy. We cannot help looking at them as affected with a kind of mental Daltonism.¹³¹ . . .

"Believing ignorance," said an old Scotch divine, "is much better than rash and presumptuous knowledge." But which is most likely to be presumptuous, ignorance, or knowledge? True faith and true philosophy ought to be one; and those disputes,—a

* Owen, in *Encyc. Brit.*, 8th edition, art. "Paleontology," p. 124, note.

double vérité,—those statements, "true according to philosophy, and false according to faith," condemned by the last Council of Lateran, ought not to find a place in the records of an age like our own. Yet so enlightened a philosopher as Faraday could say in a letter to one of his correspondents, "I claim an absolute distinction between a religious and an ordinary belief. If I am reproached for weakness in refusing to apply those mental operations, which I think good in high things, to the very highest, I am content to bear the reproach."

We must bestir ourselves; for the new generation is upon us,—the marrow-bone-splitting descendants of the old cannibal troglodytes. Civilized as well as savage races live upon their parents and grandparents. Each generation strangles and devours its predecessor. The young Feejean carries a cord in his girdle for his father's neck; the young American, a string of propositions or syllogisms in his brain to finish the same relative. The old man says, "Son, I have swallowed and digested the wisdom of the past." The young man says, "Sire, I proceed to swallow and digest thee with all thou knowest." There never was a sandglass, nor a clepsydra, nor a horologe, that counted the hours and days and years with such terrible significance as this academic chronograph which has just completed a revolution. The prologue of life is finished here at twenty: then come five acts of a decade each, and the play is over, with now and then a pleasant or a tedious afterpiece, when half the lights are put out, and half the orchestra is gone. . . .

1870

FROM

*Over the Teacups*¹³²

[*Realism in Literature*]

We got talking on the subject of *realism*, of which so much has been said of late.

It seems to me, I said, that the great additions which have been made by realism to the territory of literature consist largely in swampy, malarious, ill-smelling patches of soil which had previously been

left to reptiles and vermin. It is perfectly easy to be original by violating the laws of decency and the canons of good taste. The general consent of civilized people was supposed to have banished certain subjects from the conversation of well bred people and the pages of respectable literature. There is no sub-

¹³⁰ Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-90), English theologian and author.

¹³¹ Congenital color-blindness, from its discoverer, John Dalton.

¹³² The first installment of this series of essays appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March, 1888, the second installment in January, 1890. The book was published in Boston, 1891.

¹²⁷ Hospital for the insane in London, St. Mary of Bethlehem.

¹²⁸ Philip Henry Gosse (1810-88), English naturalist.

¹²⁹ A punning reference to the Elizabethan Globe Theatre—and God.

ject, or hardly any, which may not be treated of at the proper time, in the proper place, by the fitting person, for the right kind of listener or reader. But when the poet or the story-teller invades the province of the man of science, he is on dangerous ground. I need say nothing of the blunders he is pretty sure to make. The imaginative writer is after effects. The scientific man is after truth. Science is decent, modest, does not try to startle, but to instruct. The same scenes and objects which outrage every sense of delicacy in the story-teller's highly colored paragraphs can be read without giving offence in the chaste language of the physiologist or the physician.

There is a very celebrated novel, "Madame Bovary," the work of M. Flaubert, which is noted for having been the subject of prosecution as an immoral work. That it has a serious lesson there is no doubt, if one will drink down to the bottom of the cup. But the honey of sensuous description is spread so deeply over the surface of the goblet that a large proportion of its readers never think of its holding anything else. All the phases of unhallowed passion are described in full detail. That is what the book is bought and read for, by the great majority of its purchasers, as all but simpletons very well know. That is what makes it sell and brought it into the courts of justice. This book is famous for its realism, in fact, it is recognized as one of the earliest and most brilliant examples of that modern style of novel which, beginning where Balzac left off, attempted to do for literature what the photograph has done for art. For those who take the trouble to drink out of the cup below the rim of honey, there is a scene where realism is carried to its extreme,—surpassed in horror by no writer, unless it be the one whose name must be looked for at the bottom of the alphabet, as if its natural place were as low down in the dregs of realism as it could find itself. This is the death-bed scene, where Madame Bovary expires in convulsions. The author must have visited the hospitals for the purpose of watching the terrible agonies he was to depict, tramping from one bed to another until he reached the one where the cries and contortions were the most frightful. Such a scene he has reproduced. No hospital physician would have pictured the struggle in such colors. In the same

way, that other realist, M. Zola,¹³³ has painted a patient suffering from delirium tremens, the disease known to common speech as "the horrors." In describing this case he does all that language can do to make it more horrible than the reality. He gives us, not realism, but super-realism, if such a term does not contradict itself.

In this matter of the literal reproduction of sights and scenes which our natural instinct and our better informed taste and judgment teach us to avoid, art has been far in advance of literature. It is three hundred years since Joseph Ribera,¹³⁴ more commonly known as Spagnoletto, was born in the province Valencia, in Spain. We had the misfortune of seeing a painting of his in a collection belonging to one of the French princes, and exhibited at the Art Museum. It was that of a man performing upon himself the operation known to the Japanese as *hara-kiri*. Many persons who looked upon this revolting picture will never get rid of its remembrance, and will regret the day when their eyes fell upon it. I should share the offence of the painter if I ventured to describe it. Ribera was fond of depicting just such odious and frightful subjects. "Saint Lawrence writhing on his gridiron, Saint Sebastian full of arrows, were equally a source of delight to him. Even in subjects which had no such elements of horror he finds the materials for the delectation of his ferocious pencil, he makes up for the defect by rendering with a brutal realism deformity and ugliness."

The first great mistake made by the ultra-realists, like Flaubert and Zola, is, as I have said, their ignoring the line of distinction between imaginative art and science. We can find realism enough in books of anatomy, surgery, and medicine. In studying the human figure, we want to see it clothed with its natural integuments. It is well for the artist to study the *écorché*¹³⁵ in the dissecting-room, but we do not want the Apollo or the Venus to leave their skins behind them when they go into the gallery for exhibition. Lanciai's figures show us how the great statues look when divested of their natural covering. It is instructive, but useful chiefly as a means to aid in the true artistic reproduction of nature. When the hospitals are invaded by the novelist, he should learn something from the physician as well as from the patients.

¹³³ William Dean Howells was one of the few American critics to champion Zola at this time. For an account of the controversy over Zola see Herbert Edwards, "Howells and the Controversy over Realism in American Fiction," *American Literature*, III, 237-248 (November, 1931).

¹³⁴ Joseph Ribera (1588-1652), Lo Spagnoletto, Spanish painter and etcher.

¹³⁵ "Skinned."

Science delineates in monochrome. She never uses high tints and strontian lights to astonish lookers-on. Such scenes as Flaubert and Zola describe would be reproduced in their essential characters, but not dressed up in picturesque phrases. That is the first stumbling-block in the way of the reader of such realistic stories as those to which I have referred. There are subjects which must be investigated by scientific men which most educated persons would be glad to know nothing about. When a realistic writer like Zola ¹⁰ surprises his reader into a kind of knowledge he never thought of wishing for, he sometimes harms him more than he has any idea of doing. He wants to produce a sensation, and he leaves a permanent disgust not to be got rid of. Who does not remember odious images that can never be washed out from the consciousness which they have stained? A man's vocabulary is terribly retentive of evil words, and the images they present cling to his memory and will not loose their hold. One who has had the mischance ²⁰ to soil his mind by reading certain poems of Swift will never cleanse it to its original whiteness. Expressions and thoughts of a certain character stain the fibre of the thinking organ, and in some degree affect the hue of every idea that passes through the discolored tissues.

This is the gravest accusation to bring against realism, old or recent, whether in the brutal paintings of Spagnoletto or in the unclean revelations of Zola. Leave the description of the drains and cesspools to ³⁰ the hygienic specialist, the painful facts of disease to the physician, the details of the laundry to the washer-woman. If we are to have realism in its tedious descriptions of unimportant particulars, let it be of particulars which do not excite disgust. Such is the description of the vegetables in Zola's "Ventre de Paris," where, if one wishes to see the apotheosis of turnips, beets, and cabbages, he can find them glorified as supremely as if they had been symbols of so many deities; their forms, their colors, their expres- ⁴⁰ sion, worked upon until they seem as if they were made to be looked at and worshipped rather than to be boiled and eaten.

I am pleased to find a French critic of M. Flaubert expressing ideas with which many of my own entirely coincide. "The great mistake of the realists," he says, "is that they profess to tell the truth because they tell everything. This puerile hunting after details, this cold and cynical inventory of all the wretched condi-

tions in the midst of which poor humanity vegetates, not only do not help us to understand it better, but, on the contrary, the effect on the spectators is a kind of dazzled confusion mingled with fatigue and disgust. The material truthfulness to which the school of M. Flaubert more especially pretends misses its aim in going beyond it. Truth is lost in its own excess."

I return to my thoughts on the relations of imaginative art in all its forms with science. The subject which in the hands of the scientific student is handled decorously,—reverently, we might almost say,—becomes repulsive, shameful, and debasing in the unscrupulous manipulations of the low-bred man of letters.

I confess that I am a little jealous of certain tendencies in our own American literature, which led one of the severest and most outspoken of our satirical fellow-countrymen, no longer living to be called to account for it, to say, in a moment of bitterness, that the mission of America was to vulgarize mankind. I myself have sometimes wondered at the pleasure some Old World critics have professed to find in the most lawless freaks of New World literature. I have questioned whether their delight was not like that of the Spartans in the drunken antics of their Helots.¹⁸⁶ But I suppose I belong to another age, and must not attempt to judge the present by my old-fashioned standards.

[Walt Whitman]

Thomas Jefferson is commonly recognized as the first to proclaim before the world the political independence of America. It is not so generally agreed upon as to who was the first to announce the literary emancipation of our country.

One of Mr. Emerson's biographers has claimed that his Phi Beta Kappa Oration was our Declaration of Literary Independence. But Mr. Emerson did not cut himself loose from all the traditions of Old World scholarship. He spelled his words correctly, he constructed his sentences grammatically. He adhered to the slavish rules of propriety, and observed the reticences which a traditional delicacy has considered inviolable in decent society. . . . He was not always so careful as he might have been in the rhythm and rhyme of his verse, but in the main he recognized the old established laws which have been accepted as regulating both. . . .

¹⁸⁶ Spartan serfs.

A stronger claim might be urged for Mr Whitman. He takes into his hospitable vocabulary words which no English dictionary recognizes as belonging to the language,—words which will be looked for in vain outside of his own pages. He accepts as poetical subjects all things alike, common and unclean, without discrimination, miscellaneous as the contents of the great sheet which Peter saw let down from heaven.¹³⁷ He carries the principle of republicanism through the whole world of created objects. He will “thread a thread through [his] poems,”¹³⁸ he tells us, “that no one thing in the universe is inferior to another thing.”¹³⁹ No man has ever asserted the surpassing dignity and importance of the American citizen so boldly and freely as Mr. Whitman. He calls himself “teacher of the unquenchable creed, namely, egotism.” He begins one of his chants, “I celebrate myself,”¹⁴⁰ but he takes us all in as partners in his self-glorification. He believes in America as the new Eden.

A world primal again,—vistas of glory incessant and branching,
A new race dominating previous ones and grander far,
New politics—new literature and religious—new inventions
and arts.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Acts x 11

¹³⁸ “Starting from Paumanok,” sec. 12.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1860 reading.

Of the new literature he himself has furnished specimens which certainly have all the originality he can claim for them.

. . . So far as concerns literary independence, if we understand by that term the getting rid of our subjection to British criticism, such as it was in the days when the question was asked, “Who reads an American book?” we may consider it pretty well established. If it means dispensing with punctuation, coining words at will, self-revelation unrestrained by a sense of what is decorous, declamations in which everything is glorified without being idealized, “poetry” in which the reader must make the rhythms which the poet has not made for him, then I think we had better continue literary colonists. I shrink from a lawless independence to which all the virile energy and trampling audacity of Mr. Whitman fail to reconcile me. But there is room for everybody and everything in our huge hemisphere. Young America is like a three-year-old colt with his saddle and bridle just taken off. The first thing he wants to do is to roll. He is a droll object, sprawling in the grass with his four hoofs in the air, but he likes it, and it won’t harm us. So let him roll,—let him roll!

1891

¹⁴⁰ “Song of Myself,” in later editions of *Leaves of Grass*.

¹⁴¹ “Starting from Paumanok,” sec. 17 (1860 version).

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL (1819-1891)

In his maturity James Russell Lowell was fully aware of the good fortune which he inherited in being born into the community of Cambridge, Massachusetts, at "Elmwood," in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. And to some extent he was also aware of the handicaps which the birthright entailed.

Elmwood was a spacious old house, three-story, Georgian-style, built in 1767 by the Lieutenant-Governor of the province, Thomas Oliver, whom the citizens of Cambridge forced to abdicate in 1774. After serving as a hospital for wounded soldiers during the Revolution and later as Governor's Mansion, the house was bought by the Reverend Charles Lowell a year before the birth of his sixth child, James Russell. There, on "Tory Row," the boy spent a delightful childhood. Many years later on Lowell's return to America after his career as Minister to Great Britain, a friend suggested that he settle in Washington, D. C., but he replied warmly that he had "but one home in America, and that is the house where I was born, and where, if it shall please God, I hope to die." On another occasion, however, he commented that the house "was born a Tory and will die so. . . . I often wish I had not grown into it so."

On his father's side James Russell Lowell was descended from an old New England family, with several generations of Harvard graduates, ministers, lawyers, bankers, and, recently, industrialists. The poet's grandfather, John Lowell, a graduate in law from Harvard, was said to be responsible for abolishing slavery in Massachusetts. Charles Lowell, father of the poet, spent three years of study abroad after receiving his Harvard degree and then became a popular Boston minister. His published sermons show little depth of thought, but contemporaries testified that his radiant personality and musical voice never failed to impress an audience. In both religion and politics he was conservative, and later regarded abolitionism as eccentric.

In 1806 the Reverend Charles Lowell married Harriet Traill Spence, whose Tory family had originally come from the Orkney Islands. In contrast to the stable practicality of the Lowells, the Spence family was reputed to be negligent. Mr. Greenslet

characterizes the poet's mother in this sympathetic manner: ". . . Mrs. Lowell possessed much of the wild beauty of the people of those windy northern isles, and her mind showed an irresistible tendency toward their poetic occultism. This tendency became irretrievably fixed in a visit which she made to the Orkneys in company with her husband early in their married life. Thenceforward until 1842, when her tense brain became disordered, she was a *facrie-seer*, credited by some with second sight." Her love for crooning old ballads in the twilight must have made an early impression on her imaginative son, for throughout his life dreams and intuitions impressed themselves upon his consciousness with the strength of "visions."

The youngster's imagination seems also to have been stimulated by his sister's reading him the *Faerie Queene* as a bed-time story. As soon as he could read books for himself, he was turned loose in his father's well-stocked library of three or four thousand volumes, and books thus became his early companions. His childhood, however, was not abnormally precocious. He led a wholesome life with his brothers and sisters and other Cambridge playmates. His father often took him on long drives in a chaise through eastern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. Looking back on his youth, he wrote to a friend in 1876, "I . . . received my earliest impressions in a community the most virtuous, I believe, that ever existed."

Lowell was prepared for college by attending first a "dame school" and then a boarding school, receiving at the latter excellent training in Latin. Without unusual exertion, he was able to excel because of his natural aptitude for languages. When he entered Harvard in 1834 the college had only two hundred students. The president was Josiah Quincy, whose eccentricities Lowell later recalled sympathetically in "A Great Public Character." The curriculum heavily stressed Greek, Latin, and mathematics, but these did not interfere with young Lowell's friendships, his wide though desultory reading, and his writing for the student magazine. In fact, his student life was so erratic that he was suspended (or "rusticated")

to Concord for the last two months before his graduation in August. The final indiscretion which brought about this penalty seems to have been, as Greenslet daintily expresses it, "ambrosial jubilation" on the day he was elected class poet. He was permitted to write the poem but not to read it himself at commencement. Though naturally chagrined, Lowell spent his exile in Concord pleasantly, reciting his lessons to the Reverend Bargillai Frost and accepting the hospitality of Emerson and Thoreau, whom he ungraciously ridiculed in the poem he was writing.

For the modern student the chief significance of this class poem, a satire on contemporary ideas, is that it shows the bent of the young poet's mind. As one biographer has remarked, "From Aristophanes down the satirists have been Tories, and have turned their points against innovation rather than against tradition." In this first serious literary effort Lowell attempted in heroic couplets to ridicule the fermentation of new ideas in America, from Emerson's Transcendentalism to abolition and vegetarianism, though he shared the sympathy of the romanticists for the mysticated Indian. In a few years, after he, too, had turned reformer, Lowell would develop his satire into a propagandistic weapon rivaled in effectiveness only by the righteous anger of Whittier or the pathos of Mrs. Stowe. Yet, even in this humanitarian reform, he would remain part "Tory."

For two years after his graduation from college Lowell was so despondent over an unsuccessful love affair and his inability to decide upon a congenial vocation that he contemplated suicide. "I remember in '39 putting a cocked pistol to my forehead and being afraid to pull the trigger." He enrolled in the Harvard Law School, however, received his degree in 1840, and for two years attempted to apply himself to the practice of law, but the attention which his first volume of poems received in 1841 encouraged him to give up this profession for literature and journalism.

During these crucial years the callow satirist of 1838 was being transformed into a humanitarian by his compelling desire for affection. In a letter he confessed.

I go out sometimes with my heart so full of yearning toward my fellows that the indifferent look with which even entire strangers pass me brings tears to my eyes.

He began to sympathize with the abolitionists and to become interested in the plight of the oppressed of all lands. Consequently, when in 1840 he met Maria White, a delicate young poetess of strong moral and humane sensibilities in near-by Watertown, he fell

rapturously in love and began to flower at once as poet and reformer. Miss White's friends, who called themselves the "Band," read De Quincy, Coleridge, Keats, and Tennyson, believed in temperance and abolition, and frolicked in literary games of fantasy and mysticism. The "Band" enjoyed the reflected glory of the exalted romance between the two poetic souls, and Maria passed James' love letters around for the whole group to read. However silly these diversions may seem to the modern reader, there can be little doubt that Maria White and her friends gave Lowell the stimulation and encouragement which he needed to arouse his mind and emotions and develop his talent.

A Year's Life and Other Poems (1841) was the first literary product of Lowell's courtship and engagement. Perhaps the excessive "spirituality" of these poems betrays the poet's immaturity, but in control of form they are remarkably competent, especially the sonnets. His "Ode" (written in 1841) contains his theory of poetry. In these romantic reflections on the age when the poet was "holy man" and "seer," who embraced the "universal sorrow of mankind," Lowell conceives the poet's function to be that of

Humbling the tyrant, lifting up the lowly,
And sending sun through the soul's prison bars.

He anticipates Whitman (or perhaps more accurately, echoes Shelley) in calling for a new poet-messiah to redeem mankind.

The success of this first book encouraged Lowell to think that he could support himself by writing. After publishing verse in the *Southern Literary Messenger* and *Graham's Magazine*, he began in 1842 writing essays on the Elizabethan dramatists for the *Boston Miscellany*. The following year he became co-editor of an ambitious but short-lived magazine, the *Pioneer*, which was discontinued after the third number, leaving Lowell \$1,800 in debt. One of his essays in the *Pioneer*, however, reveals the former satirist of Emerson as now believing that

True poetry is but the perfect reflex of true knowledge, and true knowledge is spiritual knowledge, which comes only of love, and which, when it has solved the mystery of one, even the smallest effluence of the eternal beauty, which surrounds us like an atmosphere, becomes a clue leading to the heart of this seeming labyrinth.

In another editorial he joined the controversy over a national American literature by demanding not a *national* but a *natural* literature.

After the *Pioneer* fiasco Lowell went back to Elmwood, where he prepared a new edition of *Poems* (copyrighted 1844). His interests had broadened

since his first volume, especially on moral and political issues. Most reviewers were again flattering, but Margaret Fuller was an exception. She called the *Poems* "absolutely wanting in the true spirit and tone of poesy" and said the verse was stereotyped. "His interest in the moral questions of the day," she declared, "has supplied the want of vitality in himself; his great facility of versification has enabled him to fill the ear with a copious stream of pleasant sound." Such frankness hurt, and Lowell never forgave the critic.

The success of his second book enabled Lowell to marry Miss White. They went almost immediately to Philadelphia, where he was to join the editorial staff of the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, an abolitionist journal. There for a while they were very happy in their "little room in the third story (back)," but Lowell soon found the editorial policy of the *Freeman* tame and lost interest in his work. During the autumn of 1844 he was busy preparing his first book of criticism for publication, *Conversations on Some of the Old Poets* (printed in December, 1844, but dated 1845). Lowell's lifelong method as a critic is described by himself in his treatment of George Chapman:

Our object is to cull out and give to our readers the most striking and beautiful passages in those of his plays which are accessible to the American critic, adding a few explanatory notices and criticisms of our own.

After a little over a year in Philadelphia Lowell lost his position, and the young couple returned to Elmwood, where they again occupied third-floor rooms. There in four years four children were born to them, two of whom died. Their happiness was also clouded by the fact that by this time the poet's mother had completely lost her sanity and his sister's mind had also become disordered. Meanwhile Lowell wrote with undiminished vigor for the moral crusades to which he had given his allegiance and talents. Not content with merely attacking the slaveholders, he preached complete racial tolerance and equality:

It has always seemed to us that abolitionists could in no way more usefully serve their holy cause than by seeking to elevate the condition of the colored race in the free states, and to break down every barrier of invidious distinction between them and their privileged brothers.

In his unrelenting fight against slavery, the South which supported it, and politicians like Daniel Webster who were willing to compromise, Lowell offended many of his Harvard friends and even his own conservative father. But the first series of *The Biglow Papers*, which he began writing in 1846 (published

in book form in 1848), was immediately successful. The war with Mexico was unpopular in New England with a fairly large group, which saw in the conflict only the attempt of the slaveholding states to extend their territory and political power. Lowell's first attempt to dramatize his opposition to the Mexican war through the dialect rhymes of a back countryman named Hosea Biglow met with such instant approval that he continued to air his views through nine satires in this medium.

For productivity and the expression of the many sides of his mind and talent Lowell never equaled again this marvelous year, 1848, during which he published forty articles and four books, concerned with reform, literary criticism, witty ridicule, and lyric feeling. But he was not yet altogether sure of himself, and marveled at his own double nature:

I find myself very curiously compounded of two utterly distinct characters. One half of me is clear mystic and enthusiast, and the other humorist.

The "mystic and enthusiast" wrote *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, a moral and sentimental fable in which a knight dreams he sets out in youth to seek the Holy Grail and returns a broken old man to find Christ in the guise of a beggar at his own door. This poem and *A Fable for Critics* were included in the second series of *Poems*, one of the four books. The *Fable* represents the other side of the poet, that of humorist and critic. Despite the personal spleen and bias, it was, on the whole, just, though only the genteel authors like Irving and Dr. Holmes escaped the satirist's animus. Margaret Fuller and Thoreau, neither of whom was blind to the narrowness of the Cambridge tradition, were soundly cudged. But many of his judgments have stood the test of time. And with rare objectivity the satirist described himself as unable to climb Parnassus with the bundle of didacticism on his shoulders:

The top of the hill he will ne'er come nigh reaching
Till he learns the distinction 'twixt singing and preaching.

The next two years saw the beginning of a change in Lowell's life and writing. Another daughter was born in July, 1849, and died in the following February. The next month his mother died, and in December, 1850, his only son, Walter, was born. During these family events Lowell continued to write prose and verse for the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, for which he was now corresponding editor at the salary of \$900 a year. But he was beginning to find the company of the fanatical abolitionists increasingly uncongenial, and he was dropped from the editorial

staff in 1852. Probably he did not care, for he was weary of reform and wanted to devote his time and energy to poetry. To a friend he wrote

My poems have thus far had a regular and natural sequence. First, Love and the mere happiness of existence beginning to be conscious of itself, then Freedom—both being the sides which Beauty presented to me—and now I am going to try more *wholly* after Beauty herself. Next, if I live, I shall try to present Life as I have seen it.

As a first step in carrying out this resolve Lowell decided to see Europe, a part of his education which had been neglected. After selling enough land to finance two years abroad he set sail in July, 1851, with his wife, his son and daughter, and a nurse and milch goat for the children. While he was away his father suffered a paralytic stroke and Walter died, but the Lowells refused to return home until they had seen the places they had planned to visit. The poet felt most at home in Rome and believed that the Americans were the modern Romans. After traveling in Switzerland, Germany, and France, the Lowells took in the Cathedral towns of England, then sailed for America in October on the same ship with Thackeray and Clough. But the Elmwood to which they came back was a gloomy place, with the father helpless and his mind almost destroyed, and after the loss of three children, Lowell realized that his wife did not have long to live. She died in 1853.

The death of his wife was the severest shock that Lowell had yet received from life, and he sought relief in work. About 1854 he entered a new phase in his intellectual development. Though he continued to write poetry, this might be called his prose period. *Fireside Travels* (1864) is not the equal of some of his books of criticism, but it contains one of his most charming essays, "Cambridge Thirty Years Ago," and the anecdotal "Leaves from My Italian Journal" is dramatic and vivid. Especially interesting in the latter is the attitude of the descendant of American Puritanism toward the Roman Church.

She is the only church that has been loyal to the heart and soul of man, that has clung to her faith in the imagination, and that would not give over her symbols and images and sacred vessels to the penious keeping of the iconoclast Understanding. She has never lost sight of the truth, that the product of human nature is composed of the sum of flesh and spirit, and has accordingly regarded both this world and the next as the constituents of that other world which we possess by faith.

In style this prose is simple, clear, and pleasantly rhythmical, though the author's exuberance is not always sufficiently controlled. His metaphors also tend

toward an enthusiasm bordering on mysticism, as in the opening sentences of "A Moosehead Journal"

I knew as little yesterday of the interior of Maine as the least penetrating person knows of the inside of that great social millstone which, driven by the River Time, sets imperatively agoing the several wheels of our individual activities.

Here, as in the famous "Ode Recited at the Harvard Commemoration" of 1865, we find the same faults and virtues in poet and prose writer: great sincerity and facility of expression but an emotionalism that diffuses itself in prolix diction.

This prose seems, however, to have been well adapted for success in public delivery. In 1854-55 Lowell began a series of lectures on the English poets at Lowell Institute in Boston. His discursive style, his irrepressible whimsicality, and his beautiful reading voice captivated his audience. Three weeks after beginning these lectures he was appointed Professor of French and Spanish Languages and Literature and Belles-Lettres at Harvard, the position which Longfellow had held. Like his predecessor, Lowell went to Germany for study before assuming the duties of his position. He returned in August, 1856, and a little over a year later married his daughter's governess, Frances Dunlap, a devoted friend of his first wife. This fortunate marriage gave Lowell's home the atmosphere of tranquillity and encouragement which he needed for success and happiness as professor, lecturer, and author. He was not a specialized scholar, though he knew several languages and spent many years in studying Old French; above all else, he was an interpreter of literature. He believed that—

True scholarship consists in knowing not what things exist, but what they mean; it is not memory but judgment.

In a lecture published after his death he stated what he considered to be the benefits of studying *belles-lettres*:

I believe that the study of imaginative literature tends to sanity of mind, and to keep the Caliban of common sense, a very useful monster in its proper place, from making himself king over us. It is a study of order, proportion, arrangement, of the highest and purest Reason. It teaches that chance has less to do with success than forethought, will, and work.

When the *Atlantic Monthly* was founded in 1857, Lowell became the first editor, at a salary of \$2,500—later \$3,000. With the support of Holmes, Emerson, Whittier, Longfellow, and a few contributions from Thoreau and Howells, this magazine quickly acquired the greatest prestige of any literary peri-

odical in America. Although Lowell often found the editing monotonous and irksome, he performed his duties with distinction. Some of his contributors thought, however, that he edited manuscripts too freely. Thoreau was furious because Lowell deleted from "Chesumcook" the sentence about a pine-tree: "It is as immortal as I am, and perchance will go to as high a heaven, there to tower above me still." But such concessions to orthodoxy no doubt increased the prestige of the magazine with the genteel audience for which it was chiefly edited.

For some years after his withdrawal from the ranks of the abolition propagandists Lowell took a less active interest in politics; but as the national crisis approached a climax, he became one of the ablest political essayists in the country. In 1858 he exposed the deception of the American Tract Society (in an essay by this title), which had disingenuously become the helper of slavery. Lowell was most indignant, however, over the compromising, temporizing, and appeasing of the Southern slave owners by an irresolute national government. In "The Election in November" (1860) he branded the government as "an organized scramble, and Congress a boy's debating club with the disadvantage of being reported." He believed that the politicians were thwarting popular government. In "E Pluribus Unum" (1861) he declared that "the moral bankruptcy at Washington is more complete and disastrous than the financial . . ." One reason for Lowell's impatience with all attempts to save the Union by compromise was that he thought not in terms of politics, economics, or expediency but moral principles. In fact, his conception of right government is that of his theocratic New England ancestors:

Every human government is bound to make its laws so far resemble His that they shall be uniform, certain, and unquestionable in their operation; and this it can do only by a timely show of power, and by an appeal to that authority which is of divine right, inasmuch as its office is to maintain that order which is the single attribute of the Infinite Reason that we can clearly apprehend and of which we have hourly example.

Perhaps only an idealist, more at home in his study than in the untidy world which Lincoln knew, could have seen all these issues so clearly in black and white, but he was undoubtedly right in his firm belief that political problems are not to be solved by appeasement of antidemocratic forces, and this was the foundation of his political thinking, then and later. In one of his most moving poems of the period, "The Washers of the Shroud," he sensed intuitively the possibility of national disaster, but he contributed

his own support to the preservation of the Union by reviving Hosea Biglow. This second series of *The Biglow Papers* was even more popular than the first. It is a bit ironical that the pacifist of the first series should now be so militant, but Lowell was never actually a pacifist, only an opponent of the extension of slave territory. The second *Biglow Papers* are also superior to the first in being less dramatic and more lyrical—some numbers, in fact, being entirely concerned with folk-experiences and not propagandistic at all. The price of the war was brought home to Lowell by the death of two of his nephews, Lieutenant James Jackson Lowell and Brigadier General Charles Russell Lowell, and he poured both his personal and his vicarious grief into the "Commemoration Ode."

Lowell's growth as an essayist was greatly facilitated by his opportunity to edit the *North American Review* in 1864. Although he had freely published his own writings in the *Atlantic*, the *North American* afforded him more space for the expression of his thoughts in prose. In 1866, therefore, he published two of his best critical studies to date, "Carlyle's 'Frederick the Great'" and "Swinburne's Tragedies," and the following year he produced "Rousseau and the Sentimentalists," an essay which anticipated Irving Babbitt's *Rousseau and Romanticism* (1919) and perhaps had some influence in starting the American New Humanism movement of the 1920's. Lowell's essay, however, is fairer and less doctrinaire than the humanists' condemnation of Rousseau, arch enemy of moderation, restraint, and tradition. In a more famous essay, "On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners" (1870), Lowell, with truly prophetic foresight, reminded the British that their harsh critical manners were alienating friends in the United States whom they might need in the future, while he advised his countrymen, as Irving had done in 1819 in "English Writers on America," not to be so thin-skinned. In other essays, notably "Chaucer," Lowell furnished chapters for his best critical volume, *Among My Books* (1870).

The remaining two decades of Lowell's life were the most momentous and distinguished, but they belong more to political than literary history. He spent 1872-73 in Europe, then returned to teaching. But the corruptions of the Grant administration drew him into politics. He helped form an "Independent" wing of the Republican party to defeat the nomination of Blaine for the Presidency and as a consequence became a delegate to the Republican convention in Cincinnati. Then he was named a presidential elector, and in the deadlock between Hayes and Tilden

that followed the national election, Lowell's vote helped to decide the dispute in favor of Hayes. In 1877 he declined his appointment as Minister to Austria but accepted for Spain, where he became nearly as popular as Washington Irving had been. In 1888 he was transferred to the Court of St. James and quickly became probably the best loved ambassador the United States had ever had in Great Britain. In constant demand as a public speaker, Lowell strove unceasingly, and always with remarkable success, to increase the consciousness of kinship between the two countries. The faculty and students of St. Andrews petitioned him to accept the rectorship of the University, and he was also offered a professorship at Oxford. He was appointed to many honorary positions, such as the Presidency of the Birmingham and Midland Institute. His inaugural address, "Democracy," was an eloquent apologia for American political theory, but in admitting defects in its operation, he offended some of his compatriots. In 1884 the Republican party lost the presidential election, and the following year, after his wife died, Lowell was quite willing to return to America. For several years after his return he lived at Deerfoot Farm, at Southborough, usually spending his summers in England, which he loved and which loved him. In 1889 he moved back to Elmwood, and his wish to die there was fulfilled.

During these last years Lowell was less a party man than ever. He found himself constantly in disagreement with the Republican party. He had more in common with the more liberal Democrats, and particularly admired Cleveland, but in 1888 he ably defended "The Place of the Independent in Politics." Lowell was increasingly disillusioned by American politics in action, not only because of the bribery and collusion in government, but, like Henry Adams, by the decline of culture and gentlemanliness in the

men elected to office. Christ he called in "Democracy" the "first true gentleman" and "the first true democrat." This simple statement is indicative of Lowell's thinking in both politics and religion. Without actually opposing contemporary science, he greatly feared the effect of Darwinism on morals. In the epilogue to his lecture-essays on the old dramatists, which stands at the end of his collected works, he voiced a conservative fear which time has turned into prophecy.

But I have my own suspicion sometimes that the true age of flint is before and not behind us, an age hardening itself more and more to those subtle influences which ransom our lives from the captivity of the actual, from that dungeon whose warder is the Giant Despair.

The permanence of James Russell Lowell's literary achievement lies in his intuitive flashes of truth, worth, and goodness, rather than in any enduring brilliance of expression or treatment. He confessed his distrust of "the poetic temperament," with "its self-deception" and "unblessed magic," and he wrote no single poem so lasting as the best of Emily Dickinson, whom he did not know, or Walt Whitman, who impressed him as a crude barbarian not to be taken seriously. But the spirit of his poetry is that of a man who loves both nature and humanity with a deep devotion. His criticism has been overpraised by the American Humanists, who fit him into their own dogmatic strait jacket. In their attempt to make him the greatest American critic, they give him more credit for judgment and consistent principles than he deserves. But as Lowell carries his readers with him on his rambling, whimsical, and observing tours of the great books and great authors of several languages, he is a cultivated and enthusiastic guide to aesthetic beauties and moral values of the world's best literature, and this function alone entitles him to high rank in American criticism.

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¹ For articles in periodicals see Lewis Leary, ed., *Articles on American Literature Appearing in Current Periodicals: 1920-1945*, Durham, N. C., 1947.

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Sonnets ¹

II

What were I, Love, if I were stripped of thee,
If thine eyes shut me out whereby I live,
Thou, who unto my calmer soul dost give
Knowledge, and Truth, and holy Mystery,
Wherein Truth mainly lies for those who see
Beyond the earthly and the fugitive,
Who in the grandeur of the soul believe,
And only in the Infinite are free?
Without thee I were naked, bleak, and bare
As yon dead cedar on the sea-cliff's brow;
And Nature's teachings, which come to me now,
Common and beautiful as light and air,
Would be as fruitless as a stream which still
Slips through the wheel of some old ruined mill.

III

I would not have this perfect love of ours
Grow from a single root, a single stem,
Bearing no goodly fruit, but only flowers
That idly hide life's iron diadem:

¹ Thirty-five of these early sonnets Lowell collected in his first book, *A Year's Life and Other Poems*, 1841. The love poems were written for Maria White, whom Lowell married in 1844.

It should grow always like that Eastern tree
Whose limbs take root and spread forth constantly;
That love for one, from which there doth not
spring
Wide love for all, is but a worthless thing.
Not in another world, as poets prate,
Dwell we apart above the tide of things, 10
High floating o'er earth's clouds on faery wings;
But our pure love doth ever elevate
Into a holy bond of brotherhood
All earthly things, making them pure and good.
1840

IV

"For this true nobleness I seek in vain,
 In woman and in man I find it not;
 I almost weary of my earthly lot,
 My life-springs are dried up with burning pain."
 Thou find'st it not? I pray thee look again,
 Look *inward* through the depths of thine own soul.
 How is it with thee? Art thou sound and whole?
 Doth narrow search show thee no earthly stain?
 BE NOBLE and the nobleness that lies
 In other men, sleeping, but never dead,
 Will rise in majesty to meet thine own;
 Then wilt thou see it gleam in many eyes,

10

Then will pure light around thy path be shed,
And thou wilt nevermore be sad and lone
1840

v

To the Spirit of Keats²

Great soul, thou sittest with me in my room,
Uplifting me with thy vast, quiet eyes,
On whose full orbs, with kindly lustre, lies
The twilight warmth of ruddy ember-gloom
Thy clear, strong tones will oft bring sudden
bloom
Of hope secure, to him who lonely cries,
Wrasting with the young poet's agonies,
Neglect and scorn, which seem a certain doom
Yes! the few words which, like great thunder-
drops,
Thy large heart down to earth shook doubtfully, 10
Thrilled by the inward lightning of its might,
Serene and pure, like gushing joy of light,
Shall track the eternal chords of Destiny,
After the moon-led pulse of ocean stops
1841

vii

I ask not for those thoughts, that sudden leap
From being's sea, like the isle-seeming Kraken,
With whose great rise the ocean all is shaken
And a heart-tremble quivers through the deep;

Give me that growth which some perchance
deem sleep,
Wherewith the steadfast coral-stems uprise,
Which, by the toil of gathering energies,
Their upward way into clear sunshine keep,
Until, by Heaven's sweetest influences,
Slowly and slowly spreads a speck of green 10
Into a pleasant island in the seas,
Where, mid tall palms, the cane-roofed home
is seen,
And wearied men shall sit at sunset's hour,
Hearing the leaves and loving God's dear power
1841

x

I cannot think that thou shouldst pass away,
Whose life to mine is an eternal law,
A piece of nature that can have no flaw,
A new and certain sunrise every day,
But, if thou art to be another ray
About the Sun of Life, and art to live
Fire from what part of thee was fugitive,
The debt of Love I will more fully pay,
Not downcast with the thought of thee so high,
But rather raised to be a nobler man, 10
And more divine in my humanity,
As knowing that the waiting eyes which scan
My life are lighted by a purer being,
And ask high, calm-browed deeds, with it agreeing.
1841

*Rhœcus*³

God sends his teachers unto every age,
To every clime, and every race of men,
With revelations fitted to their growth
And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of Truth
Into the selfish rule of one sole race
Therefore each form of worship that hath swayed
The life of man, and given it to grasp
The master-key of knowledge, reverence,
Infolds some germs of goodness and of right,
Else never had the eager soul, which loathes 10
The slothful down of pampered ignorance,
Found in it even a moment's fitful rest

There is an instinct in the human heart
Which makes that all the fables it hath coined,
To justify the reign of its belief
And strengthen it by beauty's right divine,
Veil in their inner cells a mystic gift,
Which, like the hazel twig, in faithful hands,
Points surely to the hidden springs of truth.
For, as in nature naught is made in vain, 20
But all things have within their hull of use
A wisdom and a meaning which may speak

² The influence of Keats was very strong in Lowell's earlier poems—see Scudder's *Biography*, vol. I, pp. 94-96. But later as a critic (see "Keats" in *Among My Books*, ser. ser., 1876) his enthusiasm had cooled.

³ In classical mythology Rhoecus saves an oak from falling and is loved by the dryad residing in the tree, but when he fails to keep an appointment with her and brushes aside her messenger she blinds him. Lowell has merely put the story into verse. A dryad is a wood nymph or a spirit whose life is bound up with that of a tree.

Of spiritual secrets to the ear
 Of spirit; so, in whatso'er the heart
 Hath fashioned for a solace to itself,
 To make its inspirations suit its creed,
 And from the niggard hands of falsehood wring
 Its needful food of truth, there ever is
 A sympathy with Nature, which reveals,
 Not less than her own works, pure gleams of light 30
 And earnest parables of inward lore.
 Hear now this fairy legend of old Greece,
 As full of gracious youth, and beauty still
 As the immortal freshness of that grace
 Carved for all ages on some Attic frieze.

A youth named Rhæcus, wandering in the wood,
 Saw an old oak just trembling to its fall,
 And, feeling pity of so fair a tree,
 He propped its gray trunk with admiring care,
 And with a thoughtless footstep loitered on. 40
 But, as he turned, he heard a voice behind
 That murmured "Rhæcus!" 'T was as if the
 leaves,
 Stirred by a passing breath, had murmured it,
 And, while he paused bewildered, yet again
 It murmured "Rhæcus!" softer than a breeze.
 He started and beheld with dizzy eyes
 What seemed the substance of a happy dream
 Stand there before him, spreading a warm glow
 Within the green glooms of the shadowy oak.
 It seemed a woman's shape, yet far too fair 50
 To be a woman, and with eyes too meek
 For any that were wont to mate with gods.
 All naked like a goddess stood she there,
 And like a goddess all too beautiful
 To feel the guilt-born earthliness of shame.
 "Rhæcus, I am the Dryad of this tree,"
 Thus she began, dropping her low-toned words
 Serene, and full, and clear, as drops of dew,
 "And with it I am doomed to live and die;
 The rain and sunshine are my caterers,
 Nor have I other bliss than simple life;
 Now ask me what thou wilt, that I can give,
 And with a thankful joy it shall be thine."

Then Rhæcus, with a flutter at the heart,
 Yet by the prompting of such beauty bold,
 Answered: "What is there that can satisfy
 The endless craving of the soul but love?
 Give me thy love, or but the hope of that
 Which must be evermore my nature's goal."

After a little pause she said again, 70
 But with a glimpse of sadness in her tone,
 "I give it, Rhæcus, though a perilous gift:
 An hour before the sunset meet me here."
 And straightway there was nothing he could see
 But the green glooms beneath the shadowy oak,
 And not a sound came to his straining ears
 But the low trickling rustle of the leaves,
 And far away upon an emerald slope
 The falter of an idle shepherd's pipe.

Now, in those days of simpleness and faith, 80
 Men did not think that happy things were dreams
 Because they overstepped the narrow bourn
 Of likelihood, but reverently deemed
 Nothing too wondrous or too beautiful
 To be the guerdon of a daring heart.
 So Rhæcus made no doubt that he was blest,
 And all along unto the city's gate
 Earth seemed to spring beneath him as he walked,
 The clear, broad sky looked bluer than its wont,
 And he could scarce believe he had not wings, 90
 Such sunshine seemed to glitter through his veins
 Instead of blood, so light he felt and strange.

Young Rhæcus had a faithful heart enough,
 But one that in the present dwelt too much,
 And, taking with blithe welcome whatso'er
 Chance gave of joy, was wholly bound in that,
 Like the contented peasant of a vale, 50
 Deemed it the world, and never looked beyond.
 So, haply meeting in the afternoon
 Some comrades who were playing at the dice, 100
 He joined them, and forgot all else beside.

The dice were rattling at the merriest,
 And Rhæcus, who had met but sorry luck,
 Just laughed in triumph at a happy throw,
 When through the room there hummed a
 yellow bee
 That buzzed about his ear with down-dropped legs 60
 As if to light. And Rhæcus laughed and said,
 Feeling how red and flushed he was with loss,
 "By Venus! does he take me for a rose?"
 And brushed him off with rough, impatient
 hand. 110
 But still the bee came back, and thrice again
 Rhæcus did beat him off with growing wrath.
 Then through the window flew the wounded bee,

And Rhœcus, tracking him with angry eyes,
 Saw a sharp mountain-peak of Thessaly
 Against the red disk of the setting sun,—
 And instantly the blood sank from his heart,
 As if its very walls had caved away
 Without a word he turned, and, rushing forth,
 Ran madly through the city and the gate, 120
 And o'er the plain, which now the wood's long
 shade,
 By the low sun thrown forward broad and dim,
 Darkened wellnigh unto the city's wall

Quite spent and out of breath he reached
 the tree,
 And, listening fearfully, he heard once more
 The low voice murmur "Rhœcus!" close at hand.
 Whereat he looked around him, but could see
 Naught but the deepening gloom beneath the oak
 Then sighed the voice, "O Rhœcus! nevermore
 Shalt thou behold me or by day or night 130
 Me, who would fain have blessed thee with
 a love
 More ripe and bounteous than ever yet
 Filled up with nectar any mortal heart
 But thou didst scorn my humble messenger,
 And sent'st him back to me with bruised wings.
 We spirits only show to gentle eyes,

We ever ask an undivided love,
 And he who scorns the least of Nature's works
 Is thenceforth exiled and shut out from all.
 Farewell! for thou canst never see me more " 140

Then Rhœcus beat his breast, and groaned
 aloud,
 And cried, "Be pitiful! forgive me yet
 This once, and I shall never need it more!"
 "Alas!" the voice returned, "'t is thou art blind,
 Not I unmerciful, I can forgive,
 But have no skill to heal thy spirit's eyes,
 Only the soul hath power o'er itself "
 With that again there murmured "Nevermore!"
 And Rhœcus after heard no other sound,
 Except the rattling of the oak's crisp leaves, 150
 Like the long surf upon a distant shore,
 Raking the sea-worn pebbles up and down
 The night had gathered round him o'er the plain
 The city sparkled with its thousand lights,
 And sounds of revel fell upon his ear
 Harshly and like a curse, above, the sky,
 With all its bright sublimity of stars,
 Deepened, and on his forehead smote the breeze:
 Beauty was all around him and delight,
 But from that eve he was alone on earth 160
 1843

The Present Crisis ⁴

DATED DECEMBER, 1844

When a deed is done for Freedom, through the
 broad earth's aching breast
 Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling on
 from east to west,
 And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels the soul
 within him climb
 To the awful verge of manhood, as the energy
 sublime
 Of a century bursts full-blossomed on the thorny
 stem of Time.
 Through the walls of hut and palace shoots the
 instantaneous throe,
 When the travail of the Ages wrings earth's
 systems to and fro;

At the birth of each new Era, with a recognizing
 start,
 Nation wildly looks at nation, standing with
 mute lips apart,
 And glad Truth's yet mightier man-child leaps
 beneath the Future's heart 10

So the Evil's triumph sendeth, with a terror and
 a chill,
 Under continent to continent, the sense of
 coming ill,
 And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels his
 sympathies with God
 In hot tear-drops ebbing earthward, to be drunk
 up by the sod,
 Till a corpse crawls round unburied, delving in
 the nobler clod.

⁴ The crisis was the political conflict over the annexation of Texas and the extension of slave territory

For mankind are one in spirit, and an instinct
 bears along,
 Round the earth's electric circle, the swift flash
 of right or wrong;
 Whether conscious or unconscious, yet
 Humanity's vast frame
 Through its ocean-sundered fibres feels the gush
 of joy or shame;—
 In the gain or loss of one race all the rest have
 equal claim.

Once to every man and nation comes the
 moment to decide,
 In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the
 good or evil side;
 Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering
 each the bloom or blight,
 Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the
 sheep upon the right,
 And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that
 darkness and that light.

Hast thou chosen, O my people, on whose party
 thou shalt stand,
 Ere the Doom from its worn sandals shakes the
 dust against our land?
 Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 't is Truth
 alone is strong,
 And, albeit she wander outcast now, I see around
 her throng
 Troops of beautiful, tall angels, to enshield her
 from all wrong.

Backward look across the ages and the
 beacon-moments see,
 That, like peaks of some sunk continent, jut
 through Oblivion's sea;
 Not an ear in court or market for the low
 foreboding cry
 Of those Crises, God's stern winnowers, from
 whose feet earth's chaff must fly;
 Never shows the choice momentous till the
 judgment hath passed by.

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages
 but record
 One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old
 systems and the Word;
 Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on
 the throne,—

Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind
 the dim unknown,
 Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch
 above his own.

We see dimly in the Present what is small and
 what is great,
 Slow of faith how weak an arm may turn the
 iron helm of fate,
 But the soul is still oracular; amid the market's
 din,
 List the ominous stern whisper from the Delphic
 cave within,—
 "They enslave their children's children who
 make compromise with sin."

Slavery, the earth-born Cyclops,⁵ fellest of the
 giant brood,
 Sons of brutish Force and Darkness, who have
 drenched the earth with blood,
 Famished in his self-made desert, blinded by our
 purer day,
 Gropes in yet unblasted regions for his miserable
 prey;—
 Shall we guide his gory fingers where our
 helpless children play?

Then to side with Truth is noble when we share
 her wretched crust,
 Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 't is
 prosperous to be just;
 Then it is the brave man chooses, while the
 coward stands aside,
 Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is
 crucified,
 And the multitude make virtue of the faith they
 had denied.

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes,—they
 were souls that stood alone,
 While the men they agonized for hurled the
 contumelious stone,
 Stood serene, and down the future saw the
 golden beam incline
 To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their
 faith divine,
 By one man's plain truth to manhood and to
 God's supreme design.

⁵ Fabled inhabitant of Sicily having only one eye.

By the light of burning heretics Christ's bleeding
 feet I track,
 Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the cross
 that turns not back,
 And these mounts of anguish number how each
 generation learned
 One new word of that grand *Credo* which in
 prophet-hearts hath burned
 Since the first man stood God-conquered with
 his face to heaven upturned.

For Humanity sweeps onward where today the
 martyr stands,
 On the morrow crouches Judas with the silver in
 his hands,
 Far in front the cross stands ready and the
 crackling fagots burn,
 While the hooting mob of yesterday in silent
 awe return
 To glean up the scattered ashes into History's
 golden urn.

70

'T is as easy to be heroes as to sit the idle slaves
 Of a legendary virtue carved upon our father's
 graves,
 Worshippers of light ancestral make the present
 light a crime,—
 Was the Mayflower launched by cowards, steered
 by men behind their time?
 Turn those tracks toward Past or Future, that
 make Plymouth Rock sublime?

They were men of present valor, stalwart old
 iconoclasts,
 Unconvinced by axe or gibbet that all virtue was
 the Past's,
 But we make their truth our falsehood, thinking
 that hath made us free,
 Hoarding it in mouldy parchments, while our
 tender spirits flee
 The rude grasp of that great Impulse which
 drove them across the sea

80

They have rights who dare maintain them, we
 are traitors to our sires,
 Smothering in their holy ashes Freedom's new-lit
 altar-fires,
 Shall we make their creed our jailer? Shall we,
 in our haste to slay,
 From the tombs of the old prophets steal the
 funeral lamps away
 To light up the martyr-fagots round the prophets
 of to-day?

New occasions teach new duties, Time makes
 ancient good uncouth;
 They must upward still, and onward, who would
 keep abreast of Truth,
 Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! we ourselves
 must Pilgrims be,
 Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through
 the desperate winter sea,
 Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's
 blood-rusted key.

1844

1845

90

To the Dandelion

Dear common flower, that grow'st beside the
 way,
 Fringing the dusty road with harmless gold,
 First pledge of blithesome May,
 Which children pluck, and, full of pride uphold,
 High-hearted buccaneers, o'erjoyed that they
 An Eldorado⁶ in the grass have found,
 Which not the rich earth's ample round
 May match in wealth, thou art more dear to me
 Than all the prouder summer-blooms may be.

⁶ An imaginary city abounding in gold, said by the Spaniards of the sixteenth century to be in the interior of South America.

Gold such as thine ne'er drew the Spanish prow 10
 Through the primeval hush of Indian seas,
 Nor wrinkled the lean brow
 Of age, to rob the lover's heart of ease;
 'T is the Spring's largess, which she scatters now
 To rich and poor alike, with lavish hand,
 Though most hearts never understand
 To take it at God's value, but pass by
 The offered wealth with unrewarded eye
 Thou art my tropics and mine Italy,
 To look at thee unlocks a warmer clime;
 The eyes thou givest me

20

Are in the heart, and heed not space or time:

Not in mid June the golden-cuirassed bee
Feels a more summer-like warm ravishment

In the white lily's breezy tent,
His fragrant Sybaris,⁷ than I, when first
From the dark green thy yellow circles burst.

Then think I of deep shadows on the grass,
Of meadows where in sun the cattle graze,

Where, as the breezes pass, 30
The gleaming rushes lean a thousand ways,
Of leaves that slumber in a cloudy mass,
Or whiten in the wind, of waters blue

That from the distance sparkle through
Some woodland gap, and of a sky above,
Where one white cloud like a stray lamb doth
move.

My childhood's earliest thoughts are linked
with thee;

The sight of thee calls back the robin's song,

Who, from the dark old tree

Beside the door, sang clearly all day long, 40

And I, secure in childish piety,

Listened as if I heard an angel sing

With news from heaven, which he could
bring

Fresh every day to my untainted ears

When birds and flowers and I were happy peers.

How like a prodigal doth nature seem

When thou, for all thy gold, so common art!

Thou teachest me to deem

More sacredly of every human heart,

Since each reflects in joy its scanty gleam 50

Of heaven, and could some wondrous secret show,

Did we but pay the love we owe,

And with a child's undoubting wisdom look

On all these living pages of God's book.

1845

FROM

The Biglow Papers ⁸

[FIRST SERIES]

NO. I

A Letter

From Mr. Ezekiel Biglow of Jaalam to the Hon.
Joseph T. Buckingham, Editor of the Boston Courier,
Inclosing a Poem of His Son, Mr. Hosea Biglow

Jaylem, June 1846.

Mister Eddyter:—Our Hosea wuz down to Boston
last week, and he see a cruetin Sarjunt a struttin 10
round as popler as a hen with 1 chicking, with 2
fellers a drummin and ffin arter him like all nater.
the sarjunt he thout Hosea hed n't gut his i teeth cut
cos he looked a kindo's though he'd jest com down,
so he cal'lated to hook him in, but Hosy wood n't

⁷ A Greek city in southern Italy whose inhabitants were noted for heir love of luxury.

⁸ Lowell wrote the first series of *The Biglow Papers* as propaganda against the war with Mexico. In his introduction to the second series he said that he had no definite plan and no intention of ever writing another series. "Thinking the Mexican War, as I think it still, a national crime committed in behoof of slavery, our common sin, and wishing to put the feeling of those who thought as I did in a way that would tell, I imagined to myself such an up-country man as I had often seen at anti-slavery gatherings, capable of district school English, but always instinctively falling back into the natural stronghold of his homely dialect when heated to the point of self-forgetfulness."

take none o' his sarse for all he hed much as 20
Rooster's tales stuck onto his hat and eenamost enuf
brass a bobbin up and down on his shoulders and
figurced onto his coat and trousis, let alone wut
nater hed sot in his featers, to make a 6 pounder
out on.

wal, Hosea he com home considerabal riled, and
arter I'd gone to bed I heern Him a thrashin round
like a short-tailed Bull in fli-time. The old Woman
gut the chollery or suthin anuther ses she, don't you
ses she to me ses she, Zekle, ses she, our Hosee 's
Bee skeered, ses I, he 's oney amakin pottery * ses i,
he 's ollers on hand at that ere busynes like Da &
martin,⁹ and shure enuf, cum mornin, Hosy he cum
down stares full chizzle, hare on eend and cote tales

* *Aut insanit, aut versos facit.*—H.W. ["Either he is mad or making poetry."]

But needing at times to "rise above the level of mere *patois*," he created also the Rev. Mr. Wilbur, the pedantically learned minister of Jaalam.

The first number of these dialect satires appeared in the *Boston Courier*, June 17, 1846. It was so well received that Lowell continued the project, and when collected in book form in 1848 these "papers" were a literary sensation. Part of this popularity may have been due to the current vogue for dialect humor.

⁹ Day and Martin advertised their shoeblacking in rime.

flyin, and sot rite of to go reed his vases to Parson
Wilbur bein he haint aney grate shows o' book larnin
himself, bimeby he cum back and sed the parson wuz
dreffle tickled with 'em as i hoop you will Be, and
said they wuz True grit

Hosea ses taint hardly fair to call 'em hisn now,
cos the parson kind o' slicked off sum o' the last
vases, but he told Hosee he did n't want to put his
ore-in to tetch to the Rest on 'em, bein they wuz
verry well As thay wuz, and then Hosy ses he sed
suthin a nuther about Simplex Mundishes,¹⁰ or sum
sech feller, but I guess Hosea kind o' did n't hear
him, for I never hearn o' nobody o' that name in this
village, and I've lived here man and boy 76 year cum
next tater diggin, and thair aint no wheres a kitting
spryer 'n I be

If you print 'em I wish you 'd jest let folks
know who hosy's father is, cos my ant Keziah used
to say it 's nater to be curus ses she, she aint livin
though and he 's a likely kind o' lad

EZEKIEL BIGLOW

Thrash away, you 'll hev to rattle
On them kittle-drums o' yourn,—
'Taint a knowin' kind o' cattle
Thet is ketched with mouldy corn;
Put in stiff, you fifer feller,
Let folks see how spry you be,—
Guess you 'll toot till you are yellor
'Fore you git ahold o' me!

That air flag's a leetle rotten,
Hope it aint your Sunday's best,—
Fact! it takes a sight o' cotton
To stuff out a soger's chest:
Sence we farmers hev to pay fer 't,
Ef you must wear humps like these,
S'posin' you should try salt hay fer 't,
It would du ez slick ez grease.

'T would n't suit them Southun fellers,
They 're a dreffle graspin' set,
We must ollers blow the bellers
Wen they want their irons het;
May be it 's all right ez preachin',
But my narves it kind o' grates,
Wen I see the overreachin'
O' them nigger-drivin' States.

¹⁰ Distortion of *simplex munditus*, "neat but not gaudy."

Them thet rule us, them slave-traders
Haint they cut a thunderin' swarth
(Helped by Yankee renegaders),
Thru the vartu o' the North!
We begin to think it 's nater
To take sarse an' not be riled,—
Who 'd expect to see a tater
All on eend at bein' biled?

30

Ez fer war, I call it murder,—
There you hev it plain an' flat;
I don't want to go no furdur
Than my Testyment fer that;
God hez sed so plump an' fairly,
It 's ez long ez it is broad,
An' you 've gut to git up airly
Ef you want to take in God
'Taint your eppyletts an' feathers
Make the thing a grain more right;
'Taint afollern' your bell-wethers
Will excuse ye in His sight,
Ef you take a sword an' dror it,
An' go stick a feller thru,
Guv'ment aint to answer for it,
God 'll send the bill to you

40

Wut 's the use o' meetin'-goin'
Every Sabbath, wet or dry,
Ef it 's right to go amowin'
Feller-men like oats an' rye?
I dunno but wut it 's pooty
Trainin' round in bobtail coats,—
But it 's curus Christian dooty
This 'ere cuttin' folk's throats.

50

They may talk o' Freedom's airy
Tell they 're pupple in the face,—
It 's a grand gret cemetary
Fer the barthrights of our race,
They jest want this Californy
So's to lug new slave-states in
To abuse ye, an' to scoin ye,
An' to plunder ye like sin.

60

Aint it cute to see a Yankee
Take sech everlastin' pains,
All to get the Devil's thankee
Helpin' on 'em weld theur chains?
Wy, it 's jest ez clear ez figgers,
Clear ez one an' one make two,

70

Chaps thet make black slaves o' niggers
Want to make wite slaves o' you.

Tell ye jest the eend I've come to
Arter cipherin' plaguy smart,
An' it makes a handy sum, tu,
Any gump could larn by heart;
Laborin' man an' laborin' woman
Hev one glory an' one shame.
Ev'y thin' thet's done inhuman
Injers all on 'em the same.

'Taint by turnin' out to hack folks
You're agoin' to git your right,
Nor by lookin' down on black folks
Coz you're put upon by wite;
Slavery ain't o' nary color,
'Taint the hide thet makes it wus,
All it keers fer in a feller
'S jest to make him fill its pus.

Want to tackle *me* in, du ye?
I expect you'll hev to wait;
Wen cold lead puts daylight thru ye
You'll begin to kal'late;
S'pose the crows wun't fall to pickin'
All the carkiss from your bones,
Coz you helped to give a lickin'
To them poor half-Spanish drones?

Jest go home an' ask our Nancy
Wether I'd be sech a goose
Ez to jine ye,—guess you'd fancy
The eternal bung wuz loose!
She wants me fer home consumption,
Let alone the hay's to mow,—
Ef you're arter folks o' gumption,
You've a darned long row to hoe.

Take them editors thet's crowin'
Like a cockerel three months old,—
Don't ketch any on 'em goin',
Though they *be* so blasted bold;
Aint they a prime lot o' fellers?
'Fore they think on 't guess they'll sprout
(Like a peach thet's got the yellors),
With the meanness bustin' out.

Wal, go 'long to help 'em stealin'
Bigger pens to cram with slaves,

Help the men thet's ollers dealin'
Insults on your fathers' graves;
Help the strong to grind the feeble,
Help the many agin the few,
Help the men thet call your people
Witewashed slaves an' peddlin' crew!

120

Massachusetts, God forgive her,
She's akneelin' with the rest,
She, thet ough' to ha' clung ferever
In her grand old eagle-nest;
She thet ough' to stand so fearless
Wile the wracks are round her hurled
Holdin' up a beacon peerless
To the oppressed of all the world!

80

Ha'n't they sold your colored seamen?
Ha'n't they made your env'ys w'iz?
Wut'll make ye act like freemen?
Wut'll git your dander riz?
Come, I'll tell ye wut I'm thinkin'
Is our dooty in this fix,
They'd ha' done 't ez quick ez winkin'
In the days o' seventy-six.

130

Clang the bells in every steeple,
Call all true men to disown
The tradooers of our people,
The enslavers o' their own;
Let our dear old Bay State proudly
Put the trumpet to her mouth,
Let her ring this messidge loudly
In the ears of all the South:—

140

100 "I'll return ye good fer evil
Much ez we frail mortils can,
But I wun't go help the Devil
Makin' man the cus o' man;
Call me coward, call me traiter,
Jest ez suits your mean idees,—
Here I stand a tyrant-hater,
An' the friend o' God an' Peace!"

150

Ef I'd *my* way I hed ruther
We should go to work an' part,
They take one way, we take t' other,
Guess it would n't break my heart;
Man hed ough' to put asunder
Them thet God has noways jined;¹¹

110

¹¹ Cf. Mark x:9.

An' I should n't gretly wonder
Ef there 's thousands o' my mind

160

[The first recruiting sergeant on record I conceive to have been that individual who is mentioned in the Book of Job as *going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down on it* ¹² Bishop Latimer ¹³ will have him to have been a bishop, but to me that other calling would appear more congenial. The sect of Cainites ¹⁴ is not yet extinct, who esteemed the first-born of Adam to be the most worthy, not only because of that privilege of primogeniture, but inasmuch as he was able to overcome and slay his younger brother. That was a wise saying of the famous Marquis Pescara ¹⁵ to the Papal Legate, that *it was impossible for men to serve Mars and Christ at the same time*. Yet in time past the profession of arms was judged to be κατ' ἐξοχήν ¹⁶ that of a gentleman, nor does this opinion want for strenuous upholders even in our day. Must we suppose, then, that the profession of Christianity was only intended for losels, or, at best, to afford an opening for plebeian ambition? Or shall we hold with that nicely metaphysical Pomeranian, Captain Vratz, ¹⁷ who was Count Königsmark's chief instrument in the murder of Mr Thynne, that the Scheme of Salvation has been arranged with an especial eye to the necessities of the upper classes, and that "God would consider a gentleman and deal with him suitably to the condition and profession he had placed him in" ¹⁸ It may be said of us all, *Exemplo plus quam ratione vivimus*. ¹⁹—H W]

NO. II

A Letter

From Mr. Hosea Biglow to the Hon. J. T. Buckingham, Editor of the Boston Courier, Covering a Letter from Mr. B. Sawin, Private in the Massachusetts Regiment

[This letter of Mr. Sawin's was not originally written in verse. Mr. Biglow, thinking it peculiarly susceptible of metrical adornment, translated it, so to speak, into his own vernacular tongue. This is not the time to consider the question, whether rhyme be a mode of expression natural to the human race. If leisure from other and more important avocations be granted, I will handle the matter more at large in an appendix to the present volume. In this place I will barely remark, that I have sometimes noticed in the unlanguageed prattlings of infants a fondness for alliteration, assonance, and even rhyme, in which natural predisposition we may trace the three degrees through

¹² Cf. Job 17

¹³ Hugh Latimer (1490?–1555), a leader in the English Reformation.

¹⁴ A religious sect of the second century, teaching that Cain represented higher powers and Abel the lower powers.

¹⁵ Fernando Francesco Davalos, Marquis of Pescara (1489–1525), Italian military leader.

¹⁶ "Especially"

which our Anglo-Saxon verse rose to its culmination in the poetry of Pope. I would not be understood as questioning in these remarks that pious theory which supposes that children, if left entirely to themselves, would naturally discourse in Hebrew. For thus the authority of one experiment is claimed, and I could, with Sir Thomas Browne, desire its establishment, inasmuch as the acquirement of that sacred tongue would thereby be facilitated. I am aware that Herodotus ²⁰ states the conclusion of Psammetichus to have been in favor of a dialect of the Phrygian. ²¹ But, beside the chance that a trial of this importance would hardly be blessed to a Pagan monarch whose only motive was curiosity, we have on the Hebrew side the comparatively recent investigation of James the Fourth of Scotland. I will add to this prefatory remark, that Mr. Sawin, though a native of Jaalam, has never been a stated attendant on the religious exercises of my congregation. I consider my humble efforts prospered in that not one of my sheep hath ever induced the wolf's clothing of war, save for the comparatively innocent diversion of a militia training. Not that my flock are backward to undergo the hardships of *defensive* warfare. They serve cheerfully in the great army which fights, even unto death *pro aris et focus*, ²² accounted with the spade, the axe, the plane, the sledge, the spelling-book, and other such effectual weapons against want and ignorance and unthrift. I have taught them (under God) to esteem our human institutions as but tents of a night, to be stricken whenever Truth puts the bugle to her lips and sounds a march to the heights of wider-viewed intelligence and more perfect organization.—H W]

Mister Buckinnum, the follerin Billet was writ hum by a Yung feller of our town that was cussed fool enuff to goe atrottin inter Miss Chiff aiter a Drum and fife. it ain't Nater for a feller to let on that he's sick o' any bizness that He went intu off his own free will and a Cord, but I rather cal'late he's middlin tired o' voluntearin. By this Time I bleeve u may put dependunts on his statemence. For I never heered nothin bad on him let Alone his havin what Parson Wilbur cals a *pong shong* for cocktals, and he ses it wuz a soshuashun of idees sot him agoin arter the Crootin Sargient cos he worc a cocktalc onto his liat.

his Folks gin the letter to me and i shew it to parson Wilbur and he ses it oughter Bee printed. send It to mister Buckinnum, ses he, i don't ollers

¹⁷ The allusions are probably to a story told by John Evelyn in his *Diary* for March 10, 1682, about an assassination that took place in February, 1682, in Pall Mall.

¹⁸ Paraphrase from the foregoing passage in Evelyn's *Diary*.

¹⁹ "We live by example more than by reason."

²⁰ Greek historian of the fifth century.

²¹ Ancient country of central and northern Asia Minor; language closely related to Greek.

²² "For altars and hearths."

agree with him, ses he, but by Time,* ses he, I *du* like a feller that aint a Feared.

I have intusspussed a Few refleckshuns hear and thair. We're kind o' prest with Hayin.

Ewers respectfly

HOSEA BIGLOW.

This kind o' sogerin' aint a mite like our October trainin',

A chap could clear right out from there ef 't only looked like rainin',

An' th' Cunnles, tu, could kiver up their shappoes with bandanners,

An' send the insines skootin' to the barroom with their banners

(Fear o' gittin' on 'em spotted), an' a feller could cry quarter

Ef he fired away his ramrod arter tu much rum an' water.

Recollect wut fun we hed, you 'n' I an' Ezry Hollis,

Up there to Waltham plain last fall, along o' the Cornwallis? †

This sort o' thing aint *jest* like thet,—I wish thet I wuz fuder,‡—

Nimepunce a day fer killin' folks comes kind o' low fer murder,

(Wy I've worked out to slarterin' some fer Deacon Cephas Billins,

An' in the hardest times there wuz I ollers tetched ten shillins,)

There's sutthin' gits into my throat thet makes it hard to swaller,

It comes so nateral to think about a hempen collar;

It's glory,—but, in spite o' all my tryin' to git callous,

I feel a kind o' in a cart, aridin' to the gallus.

But wen it comes to *bein'* killed,—I tell ye I felt streaked

* In relation to this expression, I cannot but think that Mr. Biglow has been too hasty in attributing it to me. Though Time be a comparatively innocent personage to swear by, and though Longinus²³ in his discourse *Περὶ ὕψους* have commended timely oaths as not only a useful but sublime figure of speech, yet I have always kept my lips free from that abomination. *Ōdi profanum vulgus*,²⁴ I hate your swearing and hectoring fellows.—H. W.

† I hat the Site of a feller with a muskit as I *du pizn* But their *is* fun to a cornwallis I aint agoin' to deny it. —H. B.

The fust time 't ever I found out wy baggonets wuz peaked;

Here's how it wuz: I started out to go to a fandango,

The sentinul he ups an' sez, "Thet's fuder an' you can go."

"None o' your sarse," sez I; sez he, "Stan' back!" "Aint you a buster?"

Sez I, "I'm up to all thet air, I guess I've ben to muster;

I know wy sentinuls air sot; you aint agoin' to eat us;

Calcb haint no monopoly to court the seenor-ectas;

My folks to hum air full ez good ez his'n be, by golly!"

An' so ez I wuz goin' by, not thinkin' wut would folly,

The everlastin' cus he stuck his one-pronged pitchfork in me

An' made a hole right thru my close ez ef I wuz an in'my.

Wal, it beats all how big I felt hoorawin' in ole Funnel

Wen Mister Bolles he gin the sword to our Leftenant Cunnle,

(It's Mister Secondary Bolles,§ thet writ the prize peace essay;

Thet's wy he did n't list himself along o' us, I dessay,)

An' Rantoul, tu, talked pooty loud, but don't put *his* foot in it,

Coz human life's so sacred thet he's principled agin it,—

Though I myself can't rightly see it's any wus achokin' on 'em,

Than puttin' bullets thru their lights, or with a bagnet pokin' on 'em;

How drefle slick he reeled it off (like Blitz at our lyceum

Ahaulin' ribbons from his chops so quick you skeercely see 'em),

‡ he means Not quite so fur I guess.—H. B.

§ the ignerant creeter means Sekketary; but he ollers stuck to his books like Cobbler's wax to an ilestone. —H. B.

²³ Longinus was a great Greek literary critic probably of the first century, though nothing is known of his life. His chief work was his discourse *On the Sublime*.

²⁴ "I hate profane vulgarity."

About the Anglo-Saxon race (an' saxons would
be handy
To du the buryin' down here upon the Rio
Grandy),
About our patriotic pas an' our star-spangled
banner,
Our country's bird alookin' on an' singin' out
hosanner,
An' how he (Mister B. himself) wuz happy fer
Ameriky,—
I felt, ez sister Patience sez, a leetle mite
histericky.
I felt, I swon, ez though it wuz a drefle kind o'
privilege
Atrampin' round thru Boston streets among the
gutter's dnvelage,
I act'lly thought it wuz a treat to hear a little
drummin',
An' it did bonyfidy seem millanyum wuz acomin'
Wen all on us got suits (darned like them wore
in the state prison)
An' every feller felt ez though all Mexico wuz
hisn.*

This 'ere 's about the meanest place a skunk
could wal diskiver
(Saltillo's Mexican, I b'lieve, fer wut we call
Salt-river),
The sort o' trash a feller gits to eat doos beat all
nater,
I'd give a year's pay fer a smell o' one good blue-
nose tater,
The country here thet Mister Bolles declared to
be so charmin'
Throughout is swarmin' with the most alarmin'
kind o' varmin.
He talked about delishis froot, but then it wuz
a wopper all,
The holl on 't 's mud an' prickly pears, with here
an' there a chapparal,
You see a feller peekin' out, an', fust you know, a
lanat

* it must be aloud that there 's a streak of nater in
lovin' sho, but it sartinly is 1 of the curusest things in nater
to see a nspecktable dn goods dealer (deekon off a chutch
maybe) a nggin' himself out in the Weigh they du and
struttin' round in the Reign aspinin' his trowsis and makin'
wet goods of himself Ef any thin's foolisher and moor
dickus than military gloary it is mulishy gloary —H B

Is round your throat an' you a copse, 'fore you can
say, "Wut air ye at?" †
You never see sech darned gret bugs (it may not
be irrelevant
To say I've seen a *scarabæus pilularius* ‡ big ez
a year old elephant),
The rigiment come up one day in time to stop a
red bug
From runnin' off with Cunnle Wright,—'t wuz
jest a common *cimex lectularius*.²⁵

One night I started up on cend an' thought I
wuz to hum agin,
I heern a horn, thinks I it's Sol the fisherman
hez come agin,
His bellowses is sound enough,—ez I 'm a livin'
creeter,
I felt a thing go thru my leg,—'t wuz nothin'
more 'n a skeeter!
Then there 's the yaller fever, tu, they call it here
el vomito,—
(Come, thet wun't du, you landcrab there, I tell
yc to le' go my toe!
My gracious! it's a scorpion thet 's took a shine
to play with 't,
I darsn't skcer the tarnal thing fer fear he'd run
away with 't.)
Afore I come away from hum I hed a strong
peisuation
Thet Mexicans worn't human beans,§—an
ourang outang nation,
A sort o' folks a chap could kill an' never dream
on 't arter,
No more 'n a feller 'd dream o' pigs thet he hed
hed to slarter;
I'd an idee thet they were built arter the darkie
fashion all,
An' kickin' colored folks about, you know, 's a
kind o' national;

† these fellers are very proppilly called Rank Herocs, and
the more tha kill the ranker and more Herowick tha bekum
—H B

‡ it wuz "tumblebug" as he Writ it, but the parson put
the Latten instid 1 scd tother maid better meeter, but he
said tha was eddykated peepl to Boston and tha would n't
stan' it no how. idnow as tha wood and idnow as tha
wood —H B

§ he means human beins, that 's wut he means. i spose
he kinder thought tha wuz human beans ware the Xile
Poles comes from —H B

²⁵ Bedbug

But wen I jined I worn't so wise ez thet air queen
 o' Sheby,
 Fer, come to look at 'em, they aint much diff'rent
 from wut we be,
 An' here we air ascrougin' 'em out o' thir own
 dominions,
 Ashelterin' 'em, ez Caleb sez, under our eagle's
 pinions,
 Wich means to take a feller up jest by the slack
 o' 's trowsis
 An' walk him Spanish clear right out o' all his
 homes an' houses;
 Wal, it does seem a curus way, but then hooraw
 fer Jackson!
 It must be right, fer Caleb sez it's reg'lar Anglo-
 saxon.
 The Mex'cans don't fight fair, they say, they
 piz'n all the water,
 An' du amazin' lots o' things thet is n't wut they
 ough' to;
 Bein' they haint no lead, they make their bullets
 out o' copper
 An' shoot the darned things at us, tu, wich Caleb
 sez aint proper;
 He sez they 'd ough' to stan' right up an' let us
 pop 'em fairly
 (Guess wen he ketches 'em at thet he 'll hev to
 git up airy),
 Thet our nation's bigger 'n theim an' so its
 rights air bigger,
 An' thet it's all to make 'em free that we air
 pullin' trigger,
 Thet Anglo Saxondom's idee's abreakin' 'em to
 pieces,
 An' thet idee's thet every man doos jest wut he
 damn pleases;
 Ef I don't make his meanin' clear, perhaps in
 some respex I can,
 I know thet "evcry man" don't mean a nigger
 or a Mexican;
 An' there's another thing I know, an' thet is,
 ef these creetur,

80

90

Thet stick an Anglosaxon mask onto State-prison
 feeturs,
 Should come to Jaalam Centre fer to argify an'
 spout on 't,
 The gals 'ould count the silver spoons the minnit
 they cleared out on 't.
 This goin' ware glory waits ye haint one agreeable
 feetur,
 An' ef it worn't fer wakin' snakes, I'd home agin
 short meter;
 O, would n't I be off, quick time, ef 't worn't
 thet I wuz sartin
 They 'd let the daylight into me to pay me fer
 desartin!
 I don't approve o' tellin' tales, but jest to you I
 I may state
 Our ossifers aint wut they wuz afore they left the
 Bay-state;
 Then it wuz "Mister Sawin, sir, you 're middlin'
 well now, be ye?
 Step up an' take a nipper, sir; I'm drefle glad to
 see ye;"
 But now it's "Ware's my eppylet? here, Sawin,
 step an' fetch it!
 An' mind your eye, be thund'rin' spry, or, damn
 ye, you shall ketch it!"
 Wal, ez the Doctor sez, some pork will bile so,
 but by mighty,
 Ef I hed some on 'em to hum, I 'd give 'em
 linkum vity,
 I 'd play the rogue's march on their hides an'
 other music follerin'—
 But I must close my letter here, fer one on 'em's
 ahollerin',
 These Anglosaxon ossifers,—wal, taint no use
 ajawin',
 I'm safe enlisted fer the war,

100

110

Yourn,

BIRDOFREEDOM SAWIN.²⁶²⁶ The Rev. Mr. Wilbur's learned comments omitted.

FROM NO III

*What Mr Robinson Thinks*²⁷

Guvener B is a sensible man,
 He stays to his home an' looks arter his folks;
 He draws his furrel ez straight ez he can,
 An' into nobody's tater-patch pokes,
 But John P
 Robinson he
 Sez he wunt vote for Guvener B

My! aint it terrible? Wut shall we du?
 We can't never choose him o' course,—thet's
 flat;
 Guess we shall have to come round, (don't you?) 10
 An' go in fer thunder an' guns, an' all that;
 Fer John P
 Robinson he
 Sez he wunt vote fer Guvener B

Gineral C. is a drefle smart man
 He's ben on all sides thet give places or pelf,
 But consistency still wuz a part of his plan,—
 He's ben true to *one* party,—an' thet is him-
 self,—
 So John P.
 Robinson he
 Sez he shall vote fer Gineral C.

Gineral C he goes in fer the war,
 He don't vally princerple more 'n an old cud;
 Wut did God make us raytional creeturs fer,
 But glory an' gunpowder, plunder an' blood?
 So John P.
 Robinson he
 Sez he shall vote fer Gineral C.

We were gittin' on nicely up here to our village,
 With good old idees o' wut's right an' wut
 aint,
 We kind o' thought Christ went agin war an'
 pillage,
 An' thet eppyletts worn't the best mark of a
 saint,

But John P
 Robinson he
 Sez this kind o' thing's an exploded idee

The side of our country must ollers be took,
 An' Presidunt Polk, you know, *he* is our country,
 An' the angel thet writes all our sins in a book
 Puts the *debit* to him, an' to us the *per contry*,
 An' John P. 40
 Robinson he
 Sez this is his view o' the thing to a T

Parson Wilbur he calls all these argimunts lies,
 Sez they're nothin' on airth but jest *fee, faw,*
fum,
 An' thet all this big talk of our destinies
 Is half on it ign'ance, an' t'other half rum,
 But John P
 Robinson he

Sez it aint no sech thing; an', of course, so
 must we

Parson Wilbur sez *he* never heerd in his life 50
 Thet th' Apostles rigged out in their swaller-
 tail coats,
 An' marched round in front of a drum an' a fife,
 To git some on 'em office, an' some on 'em
 votes,

But John P
 Robinson he
 Sez they did n't know everythin' down in
 Judee.

Wal, it's a marcy we've got folks to tell us
 The rights an' the wrongs o' these matters, I
 vow,—

God sends country lawyers, an' other wise fellers,
 To start the world's team wen it gits in a
 slough; 60
 Fer John P.
 Robinson he
 Sez the world 'll go right, ef he hollers out
 Gee!

²⁷ The Cambridge Edition of Lowell's *Poetical Works* has these explanatory notes on this poem

"George Nixon Briggs was the Whig Governor of Massachusetts from 1844 to 1851. The campaign referred to here is that of 1847. Governor Briggs was renominated by acclamation and supported by his party with great enthusiasm. His opponent was Caleb Cushing, then in Mexico, and raised by President Polk to the rank of Brigadier-General. Cushing was defeated by a majority of 14,060.

"John Paul Robinson (1799-1864) was a resident of Lowell,

a lawyer of considerable ability, and a thorough classical scholar. He represented Lowell in the State Legislature in 1829, 1830, 1831, 1833, and 1842, and was Senator from Middlesex in 1836. Late in the gubernatorial contest of 1847 it was rumored that Robinson, heretofore a zealous Whig, and a delegate to the recent Springfield Convention, had gone over to the Democratic or, as it was then styled, the "Loco" camp. The editor of the *Boston Palladium* wrote to him to learn the truth, and Robinson replied in an open letter avowing his intention to vote for Cushing."

[SECOND SERIES]

The Courtin' ²⁸

God makes sech nights, all white an' still
 Fur 'z you can look or listen,
 Moonshine an' snow on field an' hill,
 All silence an' all glisten.

Zekle crep' up quite unbeknown,
 An' peeked in thru' the winder,
 An' there sot Huldy all alone,
 'ith no one nigh to hender.

A fireplace filled the room's one side
 With half a cord o' wood in—
 There war n't no stoves (tell comfort died)
 To bake ye to a puddin'.

The wa'nut logs shot sparkles out
 Towards the pootiest, bless her,
 An' leetle flames danced all about
 The chiny on the dresser.

Agin the chimbley crook-necks hung,
 An' in amongst 'em rusted
 The ole queen's-arm thet gran'ther Young
 Fetched back f'om Concord busted.

The very room, coz she was in,
 Seemed warm f'om floor to ceilin',
 An' she looked full ez rosy agin
 Ez the apples she was peelin'.

'T was kin' o' kingdom-come to look
 On sech a blessed cretur,
 A dogrose blushin' to a brook
 Ain't modester nor sweeter.

He was six foot o' man, A 1,
 Clear grit an' human natur',
 None could n't quicker pitch a ton
 Nor dror a furrer straighter.

He 'd sparked it with full twenty gals,
 Hed squired 'em, danced 'em, druv 'em,
 Fust this one, an' then thet, by spells—
 All is, he could n't love 'em.

But long o' her his veins 'ould run
 All crinkly like curled maple,
 The side she breshed felt full o' sun
 Ez a south slope in Ap'il.

40

She thought no v'ice hed sech a swing
 Ez hisn in the choir;
 My! when he made Ole Hunderd ring,
 She *knowed* the Lord was nigher.

10

An' she 'd blush scarlit, right in prayer,
 When her new meetin'-bunnet
 Felt somehow thru' its crown a pair
 O' blue eyes sot upun it.

Thet night, I tell ye, she looked *some!*
 She seemed to 've gut a new soul,
 For she felt sartin-sure he 'd come,
 Down to her very shoe-sole.

50

20 She heered a foot, an' knowed it tu,
 A-raspin' on the scraper,—
 All ways to once her feelins flew
 Like sparks in burnt-up paper.

He kin' o' l'itered on the mat,
 Some doubtfle o' the sekle,
 His heart kep' goin' pity-pat,
 But hern went pity Zekle.

60

An' yit she gin her cheer a jerk
 Ez though she wished him furdur,
 An' on her apples kep' to work,
 Parin' away like murder.

30

²⁸ Lowell revived *The Biglow Papers* during the critical events of 1861 (first number published in the January, 1862, issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*) to arouse the North to action and to sustain morale during the discouraging months of the war. The Second Series was published in book form in 1867, with a long introduction on the growth of the idea and a dissertation on language and dialect. In the book these satires were preceded by a lyric in dialect, the origin of which Lowell explained himself: "The only attempt I had ever made at anything like a pastoral (if that may be called an attempt which was the result almost of pure accident) was in *The Courtin'*. While the introduction to the First Series was going through the press, I received word from the printer that there was a blank page left which must be filled. I sat down at once and improvised another

fictitious 'notice of the press,' in which, because verse would fill up space more cheaply than prose, I inserted an extract from a supposed ballad of Mr. Biglow. I kept no copy of it, and the printer, as directed, cut it off when the gap was filled. Presently I began to receive letters asking for the rest of it, sometimes for the *balance* of it. I had none, but to answer such demands, I patched a conclusion upon it in a later edition. Those who had only the first continued to importune me. Afterward, being asked to write it out as an autograph for the Baltimore Sanitary Commission Fair, I added other verses, into some of which I infused a little more sentiment in a homely way, and after a fashion completed it, by sketching in the characters and making a connected story. Most likely I have spoiled it, but I shall put it at the end of this introduction, to answer once for all those kindly importunings."

"You want to see my Pa, I s'pose?"
 "Wal . . . no . . . I come dasignin'"—
 "To see my Ma? She's sprinklin' clo'es
 Agin to-morrer's i'nin'."

To say why gals acts so or so,
 Or don't, 'ould be persumin',
 Mebby to mean *yes* an' say *no*
 Comes nateral to women.

He stood a spell on one foot fust,
 Then stood a spell on t' other,
 An' on which one he felt the wust
 He could n't ha' told ye nuther

Says he, "I'd better call agin,"
 Says she, "Think likely, Mister"
 Thet last word pricked him like a pin,
 An' . . . Wal, he up an' kist her

When Ma bimeby upon 'em slips,
 Huldy sot pale ez ashes,
 All kin' o' smily roun' the hps
 An' teary roun' the lashes

70 For she was jes' the quiet kind
 Whose naturs never vary,
 Like streams that keep a summer mind
 Snowhid in Jenooary

The blood clost roun' her heart felt glued
 Too tight for all expressin',
 Tell mother see how metters stood,
 An' gin 'em both her blessin'

80 Then her red come back like the tide
 Down to the Bay o' Fundy,
 An' all I know is they was cried
 In meetin' come nex' Sunday

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FROM

A Fable for Critics

*Reader! walk up at once (it will soon be too late),
 and buy at a perfectly ruinous rate*

A FABLE FOR CRITICS:

OR, BETTER,

(I LIKE, AS A THING THAT THE READER'S FIRST FANCY
 MAY STRIKE, AN OLD-FASHIONED TITLE-PAGE, SUCH AS
 PRESENTS A TABULAR VIEW OF THE VOLUME'S
 CONTENTS),

A GLANCE AT A FEW OF OUR LITERARY PROGENIES

(MRS. MALAPROP'S ²⁹ WORD)

FROM THE TUB OF DIOGENES, ³⁰

A VOCAL AND MUSICAL MEDLEY,

THAT IS,

A SERIES OF JOKES

BY A WONDERFUL QUIZ,

WHO ACCOMPANIES HIMSELF WITH A RUB-A-DUD-DUB,
 FULL OF SPIRIT AND GRACE, ON THE TOP OF THE TUB

*Set forth in October, the 31st day,
 In the year '48, G. P. Putnam, Broadway.*

It being the commonest mode of procedure, I premise ²⁰
 a few candid remarks

²⁹ Character in Sheridan's *The Rivals*, noted for her blunders in use of words.

³⁰ A Greek Cynic philosopher (412?-323 B.C.), reputed to have lived for a while in a tub and known for his contempt of common aims of life.

TO the READER.—

This tifle, begun to please only myself and my own private fancy, was laid on the shelf But some friends, who had seen it, induced me, by dint of saying they liked it, to put it in print. That is, having come to that very conclusion, I asked their advice when 'twould make no confusion. For though (in the gentlest of ways) they had hinted it was scarce worth the while, I should doubtless have ¹⁰ printed it

I began it, intending a Fable, a frail, slender thing, rhyme-ywinged, with a sting in its tail. But, by addings and alterings not previously planned, digressions chance-hatched, like birds' eggs in the sand, and dawdlings to suit every whimsey's demand (always freeing the bird which I held in my hand, for the two perched, perhaps out of reach, in the tree),—it grew by degrees to the size which you see. I was like the old woman that carried the calf, and my neighbors, like hers, no doubt, wonder and laugh, and when, my strained arms with their grown burthen full, I call it my Fable, they call it a bull.

Having scrawled at full gallop (as far as that goes) in a style that is neither good verse nor bad prose, and being a person whom nobody knows, some peo-

ple will say I am rather more free with my readers than it is becoming to be, that I seem to expect them to wait on my leisure in following wherever I wander at pleasure, that, in short, I take more than a young author's lawful ease, and laugh in a queer way so like Mephistopheles, that the Public will doubt, as they grope through my rhythm, if in truth I am making fun of them or *with* them.

So the excellent Public is hereby assured that the sale of my book is already secured. For there is not a poet throughout the whole land but will purchase a copy or two out of hand, in the fond expectation of being amused in it, by seeing his betters cut up and abused in it. Now, I find, by a pretty exact calculation, there are something like ten thousand bards in the nation, of that special variety whom the Review and Magazine critics call *lofty* and *true*, and about thirty thousand (*this* tribe is increasing) of the kinds who are termed *full of promise* and *pleasing*. The Public will see by a glance at this schedule, that they cannot expect me to be over-sedulous about courting *them*, since it seems I have got enough fuel made sure of for boiling my pot.

As for such of our poets as find not their names mentioned once in my pages, with praises or blames, let them SEND IN THEIR CARDS, without further DELAY, to my friend, C. P. PUTNAM, Esquire, in Broadway, where a LIST will be kept with the strictest regard to the day and the hour of receiving the card. Then, taking them up as I chance to have time (that is, if their names can be twisted in rhyme), I will honestly give each his PROPER POSITION, at the rate of ONE AUTHOR to each NEW EDITION. Thus a PREMIUM is offered sufficiently HIGH (as the magazines say when they tell their best lie) to induce bards to CLUB their resources and buy the balance of every edition, until they have all of them fairly been run through the mill.

One word to such readers (judicious and wise) as read books with something behind the mere eyes, of whom in the country, perhaps, there are two, including myself, gentle reader, and you. All the characters sketched in this slight *jeu d'esprit*, though, it may be, they seem, here and there, rather free, and drawn from a somewhat too cynical standpoint, are *meant* to be faithful, for that is the grand point, and none but an owl would feel sore at a rub from a jester who tells you, without any subterfuge, that he sits in Diogenes' tub.

Phœbus,³¹ sitting one day in a laurel-tree's shade,
Was reminded of Daphne,³² of whom it was made,
For the god being one day too warm in his wooing,
She took to the tree to escape his pursuing;
Be the cause what it might, from his offers she shrunk,
And, Ginevra-like,³³ shut herself up in a trunk;
And, though 'twas a step into which he had driven her,
He somehow or other had never forgiven her;
Her memory he nursed as a kind of a tonic,
Something bitter to chew when he'd play the Byronic,
And I can't count the obstinate nymphs that he brought over
By a strange kind of smile he put on when he thought of her.
"My case is like Dido's,"³⁴ he sometimes remarked:
"When I last saw my love, she was fairly embarked
In a laurel, as *she* thought—but (ah, how Fate mocks!)
She has found it by this time a very bad box;
Let hunters from me take this saw when they need it,—
You're not always sure of your game when you've treed it.
Just conceive such a change taking place in one's mistress!
What romance would be left?—who can flatter or kiss trees?
And, for mercy's sake, how could one keep up a dialogue
With a dull wooden thing that will live and will die a log,—
Not to say that the thought would forever intrude
That you've less chance to win her the more she is wood?
Ah! it went to my heart, and the memory still grieves,

³¹ Apollo, the sun god.

³² A nymph who escaped Apollo's pursuit by changing into a laurel tree.

³³ Title and heroine of a tale in Roger's poem, "Italy," in which a bride playfully hides in a self-locking chest and dies there. Her skeleton is found years later.

³⁴ A Tyrian princess, reputed founder of Carthage. In the *Aeneid* she falls in love with Aeneas, and after his desertion stabs herself on a funeral pyre.

To see those loved graces all taking their leaves,
 Those charms beyond speech, so enchanting but
 now,
 As they left me forever, each making its bough!
 If her tongue *had* a tang sometimes more than
 was right,
 Her new bark is worse than ten times her old
 bite."

* * *

Apollo looked up, hearing footsteps approaching,
 And slipped out of sight the new rhymes he was
 broaching,—

"Good day, Mr D—,³⁵ I'm happy to meet
 With a scholar so ripe, and a critic so neat,
 Who through Grub Street the soul of a gentle-
 man carries,

What news from that suburb of London and Paris
 Which latterly makes such shrill claims to
 monopolize

The credit of being the New World's metropolis?"

"Why, nothing of consequence, save this
 attack
 On my friend there, behind, by some pitiful
 hack,

Who thinks every national author a poor one,
 That isn't a copy of something that's foreign,
 And assaults the American Dick—"

"Nay, 'tis clear
 That your Damon there's fond of a flea in his ear,
 And, if no one else furnished them gratis, on tick
 He would buy some himself, just to hear the old
 click;

Why, I honestly think, if some fool in Japan
 Should turn up his nose at the 'Poems on Man'
 (Which contain many verses as fine, by the bye,
 As any that lately came under my eye),
 Your friend there by some inward instinct
 would know it,

Would get it translated, reprinted, and show it,
 As a man might take off a high stock to exhibit
 The autograph round his own neck of the gibbet,
 Nor would let it rest so, but fire column after
 column,

Signed Cato, or Brutus, or something as solemn,
 By way of displaying his critical crosses,
 And tweaking that poor transatlantic proboscis,

³⁵ Charles Dickens.

His broadsides resulting (this last there's no
 doubt of)

In successively sinking the craft they're fired
 out of

Now nobody knows when an author is hit,
 If he have not a public hysterical fit,
 Let him only keep close in his snug garret's
 dim ether,

And nobody'd think of his focs—or of him either,
 If an author have any least fibre of worth in him,
 Abuse would but tickle the organ of mirth in
 him;

All the critics on earth cannot crush with their
 ban

One word that's in tune with the nature of man "

* * *

"But stay, here comes Tityrus Griswold,³⁶ and
 leads on

The flocks whom he first plucks alive, and then
 feeds on,—

A loud-cackling swarm, in whose feathers warm
 drest,

He goes for as perfect a—swan as the rest

"There comes Emerson first, whose rich
 words, every one,

Are like gold nails³⁷ in temples to hang tropics on,
 Whose prose is grand verse, while his verse, the
 Lord knows,

Is some of it pr—No, 'tis not even prose;
 I'm speaking of metres, some poems have welled
 From those rare depths of soul that have ne'er
 been excelled;

They're not epics, but that doesn't matter a pin,
 In creating, the only hard thing's to begin;
 A grass-blade's no easier to make than an oak,
 If you've once found the way, you've achieved
 the grand stroke;

In the worst of his poems are mines of rich matter,
 But thrown in a heap with a crash and a clatter;
 Now it is not one thing nor another alone
 Makes a poem, but rather the general tone,
 The something pervading, uniting the whole,
 The before unconceived, unconceivable soul,
 So that just in removing this trifle or that, you

³⁶ Rufus Wilmot Griswold (1815–57), American critic and anthologist *Tityrus*, a shepherd in Greek idyls and Virgil's first Eclogue

³⁷ Ecclesiastes xii: 11.

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Take away, as it were, a chief limb of the statue; 90
 Roots, wood, bark, and leaves singly perfect
 may be,
 But, clapt hodge-podge together, they don't
 make a tree.

“But, to come back to Emerson (whom, by
 the way,
 I believe we left waiting),—his is, we may say,
 A Greek head on right Yankee shoulders, whose
 range
 Has Olympus for one pole, for t’other the
 Exchange;³⁸
 He seems, to my thinking (although I’m afraid
 The comparison must, long ere this, have been
 made),
 A Plotinus-Montaigne,³⁹ where the Egyptian’s
 gold mist
 And the Gascon’s shrewd wit cheek-by-jowl
 coexist; 100
 All admire, and yet scarcely six converts he’s got
 To I don’t (nor they either) exactly know what;
 For though he builds glorious temples, ’tis odd
 He leaves never a doorway to get in a god.
 ’Tis refreshing to old-fashioned people like me
 To meet such a primitive Pagan as he,
 In whose mind all creation is duly respected
 As parts of himself—just a little projected;
 And who’s willing to worship the stars and the
 sun,
 A convert to—nothing but Emerson. 110
 So perfect a balance there is in his head,
 That he talks of things sometimes as if they
 were dead;
 Life, nature, love, God, and affairs of that sort,
 He looks at as merely ideas; in short,
 As if they were fossils stuck round in a cabinet,
 Of such vast extent that our earth’s a mere dab
 in it;
 Composed just as he is inclined to conjecture her,
 Namely, one part pure earth, ninety-nine parts
 pure lecturer;
 You are filled with delight at his clear
 demonstration,
 Each figure, word, gesture, just fits the occasion, 120

With the quiet precision of science he’ll sort ’em,
 But you can’t help suspecting the whole a
 post mortem.

“There are persons, mole-blind to the soul’s
 make and style,
 Who insist on a likeness ’twixt him and Carlyle;
 To compare him with Plato would be vastly
 fairer,
 Carlyle’s the more burly, but E. is the rarer;
 He sees fewer objects, but clearer, truelier,
 If C.’s as original, E.’s more peculiar;
 That he’s more of a man you might say of the
 one,
 Of the other he’s more of an Emerson; 130
 C.’s the Titan,⁴⁰ as shaggy of mind as of limb,—
 E. the clear-eyed Olympian, rapid and slim;
 The one’s two thirds Norseman, the other half
 Greek,
 Where the one’s most abounding, the other’s
 to seek;
 C.’s generals require to be seen in the mass,—
 E.’s specialties gain if enlarged by the glass;
 C. gives nature and God his own fits of the blues,
 And rims common-sense things with mystical
 hues,—
 E. sits in a mystery calm and intense,
 And looks coolly around him with sharp
 common-sense; 140
 C. shows you how every-day matters unite
 With the dim transdiurnal recesses of night,—
 While E., in a plain, preternatural way,
 Makes mysteries matters of mere every day;
 C. draws all his characters quite *à la* Fuseli,⁴¹—
 Not sketching their bundles of muscles and
 thews illy,
 He paints with a brush so untamed and profuse
 They seem nothing but bundles of muscles and
 thews;
 E. is rather like Flaxman,⁴² lines strait and severe,
 And a colorless outline, but full, round, and
 clear;— 150
 To the men he thinks worthy he frankly accords
 The design of a white marble statue in words.
 C. labors to get at the centre, and then

³⁸Olympus . . . Exchange, *i.e.*, Emerson combines idealism with practicality.

³⁹Plotinus, a Roman Neoplatonic philosopher and mystic born in Egypt; Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1533–92), French essayist and skeptic.

⁴⁰One of the primeval deities; the sun god is called *Titan* by Latin poets.

⁴¹A German-Swiss painter in England, John Henry Füssli (1742–1825).

⁴²John Flaxman (1755–1826), English sculptor and draftsman.

Take a reckoning from there of his actions and
men,

E calmly assumes the said centre as granted,
And, given himself, has whatever is wanted

"He has imitators in scores, who omit
No part of the man but his wisdom and wit,—
Who go carefully o'er the sky-blue of his brain,
And when he has skimmed it once, skim it again, 160
If at all they resemble him, you may be sure it is
Because their shoals mirror his mists and
obscurities,

As a mud-puddle seems deep as heaven for a
minute,
While a cloud that floats o'er is reflected within it

"There comes —, for instance, to see him's
rare sport,
Tread in Emerson's tracks with legs painfully
short,
How he jumps, how he strains, and gets red in
the face,
To keep step with the mystagogue's natural pace!
He follows as close as a stick to a rocket,
His fingers exploring the prophet's each pocket 170
Fie, for shame, brother bard, with good fruit
of your own,

Can't you let Neighbor Emerson's orchards alone?
Besides, 'tis no use, you'll not find c'en a core,—
— has picked up all the windfalls before
They might strip every tree, and E. never would
catch 'em,
His Hesperides⁴³ have no rude dragon to watch
'em;
When they send him a dishful, and ask him to
try 'em,
He never suspects how the sly rogues came
by 'em,
He wonders why 'tis there are none such his
trees on,
And thinks 'em the best he has tasted this season. 180

* * *

"There is Bryant, as quiet, as cool, and as
dignified,
As a smooth, silent iceberg, that never is ignified,
Save when by reflection 'tis kindled o' nights
With a semblance of flame by the chill
Northern Lights

⁴³ In classical mythology the garden producing golden apples.

He may rank (Griswold says so) first bard of
your nation

(There's no doubt that he stands in supreme
iccolation),

Your topmost Parnassus he may set his heel on,
But no warm applauses come, peal following
peal on,—

He's too smooth and too polished to hang any
zeal on

Unqualified merits, I'll grant, if you choose, he
has 'em, 190

But he lacks the one merit of kindling
enthusiasm,

If he stir you at all, it is just, on my soul,
Like being stirred up with the very North Pole

"He is very nice reading in summer, but *inter*
Nos,⁴⁴ we don't want *extra* freezing in winter,
Take him up in the depth of July, my advice is,
When you feel an Egyptian devotion to ices
But, deduct all you can, there's enough that's
right good in him,

He has a true soul for field, river, and wood in
him,

And his heart, in the midst of brick walls, or
where'er it is, 200

Glow, softens, and thrills with the tenderest
charities—

To you mortals that delve in this trade-ridden
planet?

No, to old Berkshire's hills, with their limestone
and granite

If you're one who *in loco* (add *foco* here)
despis,⁴⁵

You will get of his outermost heart (as I guess)
a piece,

But you'd get deeper down if you came as a
precipice,

And would break the last seal of its inwardest
fountain,

If you only could palm yourself off for a mountain.

Mr. Quivis,⁴⁶ or somebody quite as discerning,
Some scholar who's hourly expecting his learning, 210
Calls B. the American Wordsworth; but
Wordsworth

⁴⁴ "Between ourselves"

⁴⁵ "If you're one who can be foolish on suitable occasions"—
with pun on *foco*, referring to the radical wing of the Demo-
cratic Party, called "loco focos" from having held a convention
by the light of the recently invented locofoco matches

⁴⁶ Mr. Whosis

May be rated at more than your whole tuneful
herd's worth.

No, don't be absurd, he's an excellent Bryant;
But, my friends, you'll endanger the life of your
client,

By attempting to stretch him up into a giant:
If you choose to compare him, I think there are
two per-

-sons fit for a parallel—Thomson and Cowper; *
I don't mean exactly,—there's something of each,
There's T.'s love of nature, C.'s penchant to
preach;

Just mix up their minds so that C.'s spice of
craziness

Shall balance and neutralize T.'s turn for laziness,
And it gives you a brain cool, quite frictionless,
quiet,

Whose internal police nips the buds of all riot,—
A brain like a permanent strait-jacket put on
The heart that strives vainly to burst off a
button,—

A brain which, without being slow or mechanic,
Does more than a larger less drilled, more
volcanic;

He's a Cowper condensed, with no craziness
bitten,

And the advantage that Wordsworth before him
had written.

"But, my dear little bardlings, don't prick up
your ears

Nor suppose I would rank you and Bryant as
peers;

If I call him an iceberg, I don't mean to say
There is nothing in that which is grand in its way;
He is almost the one of your poets that knows
How much grace, strength, and dignity lie in
Repose;

If he sometimes fall short, he is too wise to mar
His thought's modest fulness by going too far;
'Twould be well if your authors should all make
a trial

Of what virtue there is in severe self-denial,
And measure their writings by Hesiod's ⁴⁷ staff, 240
Which teaches that all has less value than half.

* To demonstrate quickly and easily how per-
-versely absurd 'tis to sound this name *Cowper*,
As people in general call him named *super*,
I remark that he rhymes it himself with horse-trooper.

"There is Whittier, whose swelling and
vehement heart

Strains the strait-breasted drab of the Quaker
apart,

And reveals the live Man, still supreme and erect,
Underneath the bemummifying wrappers of sect;
There was ne'er a man born who had more of
the swing

Of the true lyric bard and all that kind of thing;
And his failures arise (though he seem not to
know it)

From the very same cause that has made him a
poet,—

A fervor of mind which knows no separation 250

'Twixt simple excitement and pure inspiration,
As my Pythoness ⁴⁸ erst sometimes erred from
not knowing

If 'twere I or mere wind through her tripod was
blowing;

Let his mind once get head in its favorite direc-
tion

And the torrent of verse bursts the dams of
reflection,

While, borne with the rush of the metre along,
The poet may chance to go right or go wrong,
Content with the whirl and delirium of song;

Then his grammar's not always correct, nor his
rhymes,

And he's prone to repeat his own lyrics sometimes, 260

Not his best, though, for those are struck off at
white-heats

When the heart in his breast like a trip-hammer
beats,

And can ne'er be repeated again any more
Than they could have been carefully plotted
before:

Like old what's-his-name there at the battle of
Hastings ⁴⁹

(Who, however, gave more than mere
rhythmical bastings),

Our Quaker leads off metaphorical fights

For reform and whatever they call human rights,
Both singing and striking in front of the war,

And hitting his foes with the mallet of Thor; 270

⁴⁷ Greek poet of the eighth century B.C., known as the father
of Greek didactic poetry.

⁴⁸ A woman supposed to have a spirit of divination.

⁴⁹ Taillefer, a Norman trouvère who preceded the Normans
in the battle between Harold and William in 1066. He was
allowed to strike the first blow in the battle.

Anne haec, one exclaims, on beholding his
 knocks,
Vestis filii tui,⁵⁰ O leather-clad Fox?
 Can that be thy son, in the battle's mid din,
 Preaching brotherly love and then driving it in
 To the brain of the tough old Goliath of sin,
 With the smoothest of pebbles from Castaly's
 spring⁵¹
 Impressed on his hard moral sense with a sling?

"All honor and praise to the right-hearted bard
 Who was true to The Voice when such service
 was hard,
 Who himself was so free he dared sing for the
 slave

280

When to look but a protest in silence was brave,
 All honor and praise to the women and men
 Who spoke out for the dumb and the down-
 trodden then!

It needs not to name them, already for each
 I see History preparing the statue and niche,
 They were harsh, but shall *you* be so shocked at
 hard words

Who have beaten your pruning-hooks up into
 swords,

Whose rewards and hurrahs men are surer to gain
 By the reaping of men and of women than grain?
 Why should *you* stand aghast at their fierce
 wordy war, if

290

You scalp one another for Bank or for Tariff?
 Your calling them cut-throats and knaves all
 day long

Doesn't prove that the use of hard language is
 wrong,

While the World's heart beats quicker to think
 of such men

As signed Tyranny's doom with a bloody steel-pen,
 While on Fourth-of-July beardless orators fright
 one

With hints at Harmodius and Aristogeiton,⁵²
 You need not look shy at your sisters and brothers
 Who stab with sharp words for the freedom of
 others;—

No, a wreath, twine a wreath for the loyal and
 true

300

⁵⁰ *Anne haec* . . . *Vestis filii tui*, "Can this be the coat of your son," Latin version of Genesis xxxvii 33.

⁵¹ A fountain on Mount Parnassus sacred to Apollo and the Muses, hence the source of inspiration

⁵² Two Athenian youths who assassinated the tyrant Hipparchus of Athens, and were honored as heroes by the Athenians.

Who, for sake of the many, dared stand with
 the few,
 Not of blood-spattered laurel for enemies braved,
 But of broad, peaceful oak-leaves for citizens
 saved!

* * *

"There is Hawthorne, with genius so shrinking
 and rare

That you hardly at first see the strength that is
 there,

A frame so robust, with a nature so sweet,
 So earnest, so graceful, so lithe and so fleet,
 Is worth a descent from Olympus to meet,
 'Tis as if a rough oak that for ages had stood,
 With his gnarled bony branches like ribs of the
 wood,

310

Should bloom, after cycles of struggle and
 scathe,

With a single anemone trembly and rathe,
 His strength is so tender, his wildness so meek,
 That a suitable parallel sets one to seek,—
 He's a John Bunyan Fouqué,⁵³ a Puritan Tieck,⁵⁴
 When Nature was shaping him, clay was not
 granted

For making so full-sized a man as she wanted,
 So, to fill out her model, a little she spared
 From some finer-grained stuff for a woman
 prepared,

And she could not have hit a more excellent plan 320
 For making him fully and perfectly man.

* * *

"Here's Cooper, who's written six volumes to
 show

He's as good as a lord: well, let's grant that
 he's so;

If a person prefer that description of praise,
 Why, a coronet's certainly cheaper than bays,
 But he need take no pains to convince us he's not
 (As his enemies say) the American Scott
 Choose any twelve men, and let C read aloud
 That one of his novels of which he's most proud,
 And I'd lay any bet that, without ever quitting 330

⁵³ John Bunyan (1628-88), Puritan author of *Pilgrim's Progress*. La Motté-Fouqué, Baron Friedrich Heinrich Karl Fouqué, Baron de la Motte (1777-1843), German romantic writer.

⁵⁴ Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853), German writer of stories and literary criticism—highly romantic

Their box, they'd be all, to a man, for acquitting.
 He has drawn you one character, though, that
 is new,
 One wildflower he's plucked that is wet with the
 dew
 Of this fresh Western world, and, the thing not
 to mince,
 He has done naught but copy it ill ever since;
 His Indians, with proper respect be it said,
 Are just Natty Bumppo,⁵⁵ daubed over with red.
 And his very Long Toms⁵⁶ are the same useful
 Nat,
 Rigged up in duck pants and sou'wester hat
 (Though once in a Coffin, a good chance was
 found
 To have slipped the old fellow away under-
 ground).
 All his other men-figures are clothes upon sticks.
 The *dernière chemise*⁵⁷ of a man in a fix
 (As a captain besieged, when his garrison's small,
 Sets up caps upon poles to be seen o'er the wall);
 And the women he draws from one model don't
 vary,
 All sappy as maples and flat as a prairie.
 When a character's wanted, he goes to the task
 As a cooper would do in composing a cask;
 He picks out the staves, of their qualities heedful,
 Just hoops them together as tight as is needful,
 And, if the best fortune should crown the
 attempt, he
 Has made at the most something wooden and
 empty.
 "Don't suppose I would underrate Cooper's
 abilities;
 If I thought you'd do that, I should feel very ill
 at ease;
 The men who have given to *one* character life
 And objective existence are not very rife;
 You may number them all, both prose-writers
 and singers,
 Without overrunning the bounds of your fingers,
 And Natty won't go to oblivion quicker
 Than Adams the parson⁵⁸ or Primrose the
 vicar.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Hero of Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*.

⁵⁶ Long Tom Coffin, hero in *The Pilot*.

⁵⁷ Last article of clothing.

⁵⁸ Poor curate in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*.

⁵⁹ Vicar in Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*.

"There is one thing in Cooper I like, too, and
 that is
 That on manners he lectures his countrymen
 gratis;
 Not precisely so either, because, for a rarity,
 He is paid for his tickets in unpopularity.
 Now he may overcharge his American pictures,
 But you'll grant there's a good deal of truth in
 his strictures;
 And I honor the man who is willing to sink
 Half his present repute for the freedom to think,
 And, when he has thought, be his cause strong
 or weak,
 Will risk t'other half for the freedom to speak,
 Caring naught for what vengeance the mob has
 in store,
 Let that mob be the upper ten thousand or lower.
 "There are truths you Americans need to be
 told,
 And it never'll refute them to swagger and scold;
 John Bull, looking o'er the Atlantic, in choler
 At your aptness for trade, says you worship the
 dollar;
 But to scorn such eye-dollar-try's what very
 few do,
 And John goes to that church as often as you do.
 No matter what John says, don't try to outcrow
 him,
 'Tis enough to go quietly on and outgrow him;
 Like most fathers, Bull hates to see Number
 One
 Displacing himself in the mind of his son,
 And detests the same faults in himself he'd
 neglected
 When he sees them again in his child's glass
 reflected;
 To love one another you're too like by half;
 If he is a bull, you're a pretty stout calf,
 And tear your own pasture for naught but to
 show
 What a nice pair of horns you're beginning to
 grow.
 "There are one or two things I should just
 like to hint,
 For you don't often get the truth told you in
 print;
 The most of you (this is what strikes all
 beholders)

Have a mental and physical stoop in the
shoulders;
Though you ought to be free as the winds and
the waves,
You've the gait and the manners of runaway
slaves;
Though you brag of your New World, you don't
half believe in it,
And as much of the Old as is possible weave in it,
Your goddess of freedom, a tight, buxom girl,
With lips like a cherry and teeth like a pearl,
With eyes bold as Here's,⁶⁰ and hair floating
free,
And full of the sun as the spray of the sea,
Who can sing at a husking or romp at a shearing,
Who can trip through the forests alone without
fearing,
Who can drive home the cows with a song
through the grass,
Keeps glancing aside into Europe's cracked glass,
Hides her red hands in gloves, pinches up her
lithe waist,
And makes herself wretched with transmanne
taste,
She loses her fresh country charm when she
takes
Any mirror except her own rivers and lakes.

"You steal Englishmen's books⁶¹ and think
Englishmen's thought,
With their salt on her tail your wild eagle is
caught;
Your literature suits its each whisper and motion
To what will be thought of it over the ocean,
The cast clothes of Europe your statesmanship
tries
And mumbles again the old blarneys and lies;—
Forget Europe wholly, your veins throb with
blood,
To which the dull current in hers is but mud
Let her sneer, let her say your experiment fails,
In her voice there's a tremble e'en now while she
rails,
And your shore will soon be in the nature of
things
Covered thick with gilt drift-wood of castaway
kings,

⁶⁰ Same as Hera, wife of Zeus, king of the gods.

⁶¹ There was no international copyright law when this was
written.

Where alone, as it were in a Longfellow's Waif,⁶²
Her fugitive pieces will find themselves safe.
O my friends, thank your god, if you have one,
that he
'Twixt the Old World and you set the gulf of
a sea,
Be strong-backed, brown-handed, upright as your
pines,
By the scale of a hemisphere shape your designs,
Be true to yourselves and this new nineteenth
age,
As a statue by Powers,⁶³ or a picture by Page,⁶⁴
Plough, sail, forge, build, carve, paint, make all
over new,
To your own New-World instincts contrive to
be true,
Keep your ears open wide to the Future's first
call,
Be whatever you will, but yourselves first of all,
Stand fronting the dawn on Toil's heaven-scaling
peaks,
And become my new race of more practical
Greeks —
Hem! your likeness at present I shudder to tell o't,
Is that you have your slaves, and the Greek had
his helot?"⁶⁵

* * *

Here Miranda⁶⁶ came up, and said, "Phcebus!
you know
That the Infinite Soul has its infinite woe,
As I ought to know, having lived cheek by jowl,
Since the day I was born, with the Infinite Soul,
I myself introduced, I myself, I alone,
To my Land's better life authors solely my own,
Who the sad heart of earth on their shoulders
have taken,
Whose works sound a depth by Life's quiet
unshaken,
Such as Shakespcare, for instance, the Bible, and
Bacon,
Not to mention my own works; Time's nadir is
fleet,
And, as for myself, I'm quite out of concert"—

⁶² An anthology of poetry edited by Longfellow in 1845.

⁶³ Hiram Powers (1805-73), American sculptor who executed busts of noted men

⁶⁴ William Page (1811-85), American portrait painter to whom Lowell dedicated his first volume of poems

⁶⁵ A serf in ancient Sparta

⁶⁶ Margaret Fuller, who was unkindly critical of Lowell's first volume of poems.

"Quite out of conceit! I'm enchanted to hear it,"
 Cried Apollo aside. "Who'd have thought she was near it?"
 To be sure, one is apt to exhaust those commodities
 One uses too fast, yet in this case as odd it is
 As if Neptune should say to his turbot and whittings,
 'I'm as much out of salt as Miranda's own writings'
 (Which, as she in her own happy manner has said,
 Sound a depth, for 'tis one of the functions of lead).
 She often has asked me if I could not find
 A place somewhere near me that suited her mind;
 I know but a single one vacant, which she,
 With her rare talent that way, would fit to a T. 460
 And it would not imply any pause or cessation
 In the work she esteems her peculiar vocation,—
 She may enter on duty to-day, if she chooses,
 And remain Tiring-woman for life to the Muses."

* * *

"There comes Poe, with his raven, like
 Barnaby Rudge,⁶⁷
 Three fifths of him genius and two fifths sheer
 fudge,
 Who talks like a book of iambs and pentameters,
 In a way to make people of common sense damn
 metres,
 Who has written some things quite the best of
 their kind,
 But the heart somehow seems all squeezed out
 by the mind, 470
 Who—But hey-day! What's this? Messieurs
 Mathews⁶⁸ and Poe,
 You mustn't fling mud-balls at Longfellow so,⁶⁹
 Does it make a man worse that his character's
 such
 As to make his friends love him (as you think)
 too much?
 Why, there is not a bard at this moment alive

More willing than he that his fellows should
 thrive;
 While you are abusing him thus, even now
 He would help either one of you out of a slough;
 You may say that he's smooth and all that till
 you're hoarse,
 But remember that elegance also is force; 480
 After polishing granite as much as you will,
 The heart keeps its tough old persistency still;
 Deduct all you can, *that* still keeps you at bay;
 Why, he'll live till men weary of Collins and
 Gray.
 I'm not over-fond of Greek metres in English,
 To me rhyme's a gain, so it be not too jinglish,
 And your modern hexameter verses are no more
 Like Greek ones than sleek Mr. Pope is like
 Homer;⁷⁰
 As the roar of the sea to the coo of a pigeon is,
 So, compared to your moderns, sounds old
 Melesigenes;⁷¹ 490
 I may be too partial, the reason, perhaps, o't is
 That I've heard the old blind man recite his own
 rhapsodies,
 And my ear with that music impregnate may be,
 Like the poor exiled shell with the soul of the sea,
 Or as one can't bear Strauss⁷² when his nature
 is cloven
 To its deeps within deeps by the stroke of
 Beethoven;
 But, set that aside, and 'tis truth that I speak,
 Had Theocritus⁷³ written in English, not Greek,
 I believe that his exquisite sense would scarce
 change a line
 In that rare, tender, virgin-like pastoral
 Evangeline. 500
 That's not ancient nor modern, its place is apart
 Where time has no sway, in the realm of pure
 Art,
 'Tis a shrine of retreat from Earth's hubbub and
 strife
 As quiet and chaste as the author's own life.

* * *

"What! Irving? thrice welcome, warm heart
 and fine brain,
 You bring back the happiest spirit from Spain,

⁶⁷ Chief character in Dickens' novel, *Barnaby Rudge*, who carried a raven.

⁶⁸ Cornelius Mathews (1817–89), editor and magazine writer.

⁶⁹ Poe accused Longfellow of plagiarism in "Longfellow and Other Plagiarists."

⁷⁰ Alexander Pope translated the *Iliad*.

⁷¹ Born in Melos; refers to Homer.

⁷² Johann Strauss (1804–49), German composer of waltzes.

⁷³ Greek pastoral poet of third century B.C.

And the gravest sweet humor, that ever were there
 Since Cervantes ⁷⁴ met death in his gentle
 despair,
 Nay, don't be embarrassed, nor look so
 beseeching,
 I sha'n't run directly against my own preaching, 510
 And, having just laughed at their Raphaels and
 Dantes,
 Go to setting you up beside matchless Cervantes,
 But allow me to speak what I honestly feel,—
 To a true poet-heart add the fun of Dick Steele,
 Throw in all of Addison, *minus* the chill,
 With the whole of that partnership's stock and
 good-will,
 Mix well, and while stirring, hum o'er, as a spell,
 The fine *old* English Gentleman, simmer it well,
 Sweeten just to your own private liking, then
 strain,
 That only the finest and clearest remain, 520
 Let it stand out of doors till a soul it receives
 From the warm lazy sun loitering down through
 green leaves,
 And you'll find a choice nature, not wholly
 deserving
 A name either English or Yankee,—just Irving "

* * *

Here, "Forgive me, Apollo," I cried, "while
 I pour
 My heart out to my birthplace O loved more and
 more
 Dear Baystate, from whose rocky bosom thy sons
 Should suck milk, strong-will-giving, brave, such
 as runs
 In the veins of old Graylock ⁷⁵—who is it that
 dares
 Call thee pedler, a soul wrapped in bankbooks
 and shares? 530
 It is false! She's a Poet! I see, as I write,
 Along the far railroad the steam-snake glide
 white,
 The cataract-throb of her mill-hearts I hear,
 The swift strokes of trip-hammers weary my car.
 Sledges ring upon anvils, through logs the saw
 screams,
 Blocks swing to their place, beetles drive home
 the beams:—

⁷⁴ Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616), author of *Don Quixote*

⁷⁵ Mountain in Massachusetts

It is songs such as these that she croons to the din
 Of her fast-flying shuttles, year out and year in,
 While from earth's farthest corner there comes
 not a breeze
 But wafts her the buzz of her gold-gleaming bees 540
 What though those horn hands have as yet
 found small time
 For painting and sculpture and music and rhyme?
 These will come in due order, the need that
 pressed sorest
 Was to vanquish the seasons, the ocean, the
 forest,
 To bridle and harness the rivers, the steam,
 Making those whirl her mill-wheels, this tug in
 her team,
 To vassalize old tyrant Winter, and make
 Him delve surlily for her on river and lake,—
 When this New World was parted, she strove
 not to shirk
 Her lot in the herdom, the tough, silent Work, 550
 The hero-share ever from Herakles ⁷⁶ down
 To Odin,⁷⁷ the Earth's iron sceptre and crown
 Yes, thou dear, noble Mother! if ever men's praise
 Could be claimed for creating heroic lays,
 Thou hast won it, if ever the laurel divine
 Crowned the Maker and Builder, that glory
 is thine!
 Thy songs are right epic, they tell how this rude
 Rock-rib of our earth here was tamed and
 subdued,
 Thou hast written them plain on the face of
 the planet
 In brave, deathless letters of iron and granite, 560
 Thou hast printed them deep for all time, they
 are set
 From the same runic type-fount and alphabet
 With thy stout Berkshire hills and the arms of
 thy Bay,—
 They are staves from the burly old Mayflower lay
 If the drones of the Old World, in querulous
 ease,
 Ask thy Art and thy Letters, point proudly to
 these,
 Or, if they deny these are Letters and Art,
 Toil on with the same old invincible heart,
 Thou art rearing the pedestal broad-based and
 grand

⁷⁶ Hercules

⁷⁷ Mythological father of the Norse gods.

Whereon the fair shapes of the Artist shall stand, 570
And creating, through labors undaunted and long,
The theme for all Sculpture and Painting and
Song!

"But my good mother Baystate wants no praise
of mine,
She learned from *her* mother a precept divine
About something that butters no parsnips, her
forte
In another direction lies, work is her sport
(Though she'll curtsy and set her cap straight,
that she will,
If you talk about Plymouth and red Bunker's hill).
Dear, notable goodwife! by this time of night,
Her hearth is swept neatly, her fire burning
bright, 580
And she sits in a chair (of home plan and make)
rocking,
Musing much, all the while, as she darns on a
stocking,
Whether turkeys will come pretty high next
Thanksgiving,
Whether flour'll be so dear, for, as sure as she's
living,
She will use rye-and-injun ⁷⁸ then, whether the pig
By this time ain't got pretty tolerable big,
And whether to sell it outright will be best,
Or to smoke hams and shoulders and salt down
the rest,—
At this minute, she'd swop all my verses, ah,
cruel!
For the last patent stove that is saving of fuel; 590
So I'll just let Apollo go on, for his phiz
Shows I've kept him awaiting too long as it is."

"If our friend, there, who seems a reporter, is
done
With his burst of emotion, why, I will go on,"
Said Apollo; some smiled, and, indeed, I must own
There was something sarcastic, perhaps, in his
tone;—

"There's Holmes, who is matchless among
you for wit;
A Leyden-jar always full-charged, from which flit
The electrical tingles of hit after hit;
In long poems 'tis painful sometimes, and invites 600
A thought of the way the new Telegraph writes,

⁷⁸ Rye flour mixed with corn meal.

Which pricks down its little sharp sentences
spitefully
As if you got more than you'd title to rightfully,
And you find yourself hoping its wild father
Lightning
Would flame in for a second and give you a
fright'ning.
He has perfect sway of what I call a sham metre,
But many admire it, the English pentameter,
And Campbell,⁷⁹ I think, wrote most commonly
worse,
With less nerve, swing, and fire in the same kind
of verse,
Nor e'er achieved aught in't so worthy of praise 610
As the tribute of Holmes to the grand *Marseillaise*.
You went crazy last year over Bulwer's New
Timon;—⁸⁰
Why, if B., to the day of his dying, should
rhyme on,
Heaping verses on verses and tomes upon tomes,
He could ne'er reach the best point and vigor
of Holmes.
His are just the fine hands, too, to weave you a
lyric
Full of fancy, fun, feeling, or spiced with satiric
In a measure so kindly you doubt if the toes
That are trodden upon are your own or your foes'.

"There is Lowell, who's striving Parnassus to
climb 620
With a whole bale of *isms* tied together with
rhyme,
He might get on alone, spite of brambles and
boulders,
But he can't with that bundle he has on his
shoulders,
The top of the hill he will ne'er come nigh
reaching
Till he learns the distinction 'twixt singing and
preaching;
His lyre has some chords that would ring pretty
well,
But he'd rather by half make a drum of the shell,
And rattle away till he's old as Methusalem,⁸¹
At the head of a march to the last new Jerusalem."

* * *

⁷⁹ Thomas Campbell (1777-1844), English poet.

⁸⁰ Bulwer-Lytton published *New Timon*, a satirical poem, 1846.

⁸¹ Cf. Genesis v:27.

Here Miranda came up and began, "as to
that—"
Apollo at once seized his gloves, cane, and hat,

And, seeing the place getting rapidly cleared,
630 I too snatched my notes and forthwith disappeared.
1847-48 1848

The Washers of the Shroud ⁸²

OCTOBER, 1861

Along a river-side, I know not where,
I walked one night in mystery of dream,
A chill creeps cuddling yet beneath my hair,
To think what chanced me by the pallid gleam
Of a moon-wraith that waned through haunted air

Pale fireflies pulsed within the meadow-mist
Their halos, wavering thistle downs of light,
The loon, that seemed to mock some goblin tryst,
Laughed, and the echoes, huddling in affright,
Like Odin's hounds, fled baying down the night 10

Then all was silent, till there smote my ear
A movement in the stream that checked my
breath.

Was it the slow splash of a wading deer?
But something said, "This water is of Death!
The Sisters wash a shroud,—ill thing to hear!"

I, looking then, beheld the ancient Three
Known to the Greek's and to the Northman's
creed,

That sit in shadow of the mystic Tree,
Still crooning, as they weave their endless brede,
One song. "Time was, Time is, and Time shall
be." 20

No wrinkled crones were they, as I had deemed,
But fair as yesterday, to-day, to-morrow,
To mourner, lover, poet, ever seemed,
Something too high for joy, too deep for sorrow,
Thrilled in their tones, and from their faces
gleamed.

"Still men and nations reap as they have strawn,"
So sang they, working at their task the while,
"The fatal raiment must be cleansed ere dawn.
For Austria? Italy? the Sea-Queen's isle?"

O'er what quenched grandeur must our shroud
be drawn? 30

"Or is it for a younger, fairer corse,
That gathered States like children round his
knees,

That tamed the wave to be his posting-horse,
Feller of forests, linker of the seas,
Bridge-builder, hammerer, youngest son of Thor's?

"What make we, murmur'st thou? and what
are we?"

When empires must be wound, we bring the
shroud,

The time-old web of the implacable Three
Is it too coarse for him, the young and proud?
Earth's mightiest deigned to wear it,—why not
he?" 40

"Is there no hope?" I moaned, "so strong, so fair!
Our Fowler whose proud bird would brook
erewhile

No rival's swoop in all our western air!
Gather the ravens, then, in funeral file
For him, life's moan yet golden in his hair?

"Leave me not hopeless, ye un pitying dames!
I see, half seeing. Tell me, ye who scanned
The stars, Earth's elders, still must noblest aims
Be traced upon oblivious ocean-sands?
Must Hesper ⁸³ join the wailing ghosts of
names?" 50

"When grass-blades stiffen with red battle-dew,
Ye deem we choose the victor and the slain:
Say, choose we them that shall be leal and true
To the heart's longing, the high faith of brain?
Yet there the victory lies, if ye but knew

"Three roots bear up Dominion: Knowledge,
Will,—
These twain are strong, but stronger yet the
third,—

⁸³ Evening star.

⁸² Published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1861, after Fort Sumter, and Union forces were defeated at Bull Run. Lowell felt that the future of the nation depended upon submission to the will of God. The idea for the poem came to him on reading a book of Breton legends, probably "The Washer Women of Night" in *Le Fayer Breton*.

Obedience,—’t is the great tap-root that still,
Knit round the rock of Duty, is not stirred,
Though Heaven-loosed tempests spend their
utmost skill.

60

“Is the doom sealed for Hesper? ’T is not we
Denounce it, but the Law before all time:
The brave makes danger opportunity;
The waverer, paltering with the chance sublime,
Dwarfs it to peril: which shall Hesper be?

“Hath he let vultures climb his eagle’s seat
To make Jove’s bolts purveyors of their maw?
Hath he the Many’s plaudits found more sweet
Than Wisdom? held Opinion’s wind for Law?
Then let him hearken for the doomster’s feet!

70

“Rough are the steps, slow-hewn in flintiest rock,
States climb to power by; slippery those with gold
Down which they stumble to eternal mock:
No chafferer’s hand shall long the sceptre hold,
Who, given a Fate to shape, would sell the block.

“We sing old Sagas, songs of weal and woe,
Mystic because too cheaply understood;
Dark sayings are not ours; men hear and know,
See Evil weak, see strength alone in Good,
Yet hope to stem God’s fire with walls of tow.

80

“Time Was unlocks the riddle of Time Is,
That offers choice of glory or of gloom;
The solver makes Time Shall Be surely his.
But hasten, Sisters! for even now the tomb
Grates its slow hinge and calls from the abyss.”

“But not for him,” I cried, “not yet for him,
Whose large horizon, westering, star by star
Wins from the void to where on Ocean’s rim
The sunset shuts the world with golden bar,
Not yet his thews shall fail, his eye grow dim!

90

“His shall be larger manhood, saved for those
That walk unblenching through the trial-fires;
Not suffering, but faint heart, is worst of woes,
And he no base-born son of craven sires,
Whose eye need blench confronted with his foes.

“Tears may be ours, but proud, for those who win
Death’s royal purple in the foeman’s lines;
Peace, too, brings tears; and mid the battle-din,
The wiser ear some text of God divines,
For the sheathed blade may rust with darker sin.

100

“God, give us peace! not such as lulls to sleep,
But sword on thigh, and brow with purpose knit!
And let our Ship of State to harbor sweep,
Her ports all up, her battle-lanterns lit,
And her leashed thunders gathering for their
leap!”

So cried I with clenched hands and passionate
pain,

Thinking of dear ones by Potomac’s side;
Again the loon laughed mocking, and again
The echoes bayed far down the night and died,
While waking I recalled my wandering brain.

110

1861

*Ode Recited at the Harvard Commemoration*⁸⁴

JULY 21, 1865

I

Weak-winged is song,
Nor aims at that clear-ethered height
Whither the brave deed climbs for light:
We seem to do them wrong,
Bringing our robin’s-leaf to deck their hearse

Who in warm life-blood wrote their nobler verse,
Our trivial song to honor those who come
With ears attuned to strenuous trump and drum,
And shaped in squadron-strophes their desire,
Live battle-odes whose lines were steel and fire: 10
Yet sometimes feathered words are strong,
A gracious memory to buoy up and save

⁸⁴ Read at a commemoration service held at Harvard July 21, 1865, in memory of students and graduates killed in the recent war. Two of these were Lowell’s nephews. The poem was very nearly an improvisation, for Lowell had difficulty in getting started and completed it only the day before the memorial service. The form is that of the so-called “Pindaric” ode, which Lowell used for other poems of a solemn nature. The “Com-

memoration Ode” was published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, September, 1865, and later in *Under the Willows* (1868) and in *Three Memorial Poems* (1877). The ninth strophe was added after the poem was published in the *Atlantic*. Most admirers of Lowell’s poems regard this as one of his best achievements, but other critics find the thought diffuse and the structure too loose.

From Lethe's⁸⁵ dreamless ooze, the common grave
Of the unventurous throng

II

To-day our Reverend Mother⁸⁶ welcomes back
Her wisest Scholars, those who understood
The deeper teaching of her mystic tome,
And offered their fresh lives to make it good:
No lore of Greece or Rome,
No science peddling with the names of things, 20
Or reading stars to find inglorious fates,
Can lift our life with wings
Far from Death's idle gulf that for the many waits,
And lengthen out our dates
With that clear fame whose memory sings
In manly hearts to come, and nerves them and
dilates
Nor such thy teaching, Mother of us all!
Not such the trumpet-call
Of thy diviner mood,
That could thy sons entice 30
From happy homes and toils, the fruitful nest
Of those half-virtues which the world calls best,
Into War's tumult rude,
But rather far that stern device
The sponsors chose that round thy cradle stood
In the dim, unventured wood,
The VERITAS⁸⁷ that lurks beneath
The letter's unprolific sheath,
Life of whate'er makes life worth living,
Seed-grain of high emprise, immortal food, 40
One heavenly thing whereof earth hath the
giving

III

Many loved Truth, and lavished life's best oil
Amid the dust of books to find her,
Content at last, for guerdon of their toil,
With the cast mantle she hath left behind her.
Many in sad faith sought for her,
Many with crossed hands sighed for her,
But these, our brothers, fought for her,
At life's dear peril wrought for her,
So loved her that they died for her, 50
Tasting the raptured fleetness
Of her divine completeness
Their higher instinct knew

⁸⁵ River of Hades, whose waters when drunk cause forgetfulness of past

⁸⁶ *I.e.*, our Alma Mater

⁸⁷ *Veritas* (truth) on the Harvard College seal.

Those love her best who to themselves are true,
And what they dare to dream of, dare to do,
They followed her and found her
Where all may hope to find,
Not in the ashes of the burnt-out mind,
But beautiful, with danger's sweetness round her
Where faith made whole with deed 60
Breathes its awakening breath
Into the lifeless creed,
They saw her plumed and mailed,
With sweet, stern face unveiled,
And all-repaying eyes, look proud on them in
death

IV

Our slender life runs rippling by, and glides
Into the silent hollow of the past,
What is there that abides
To make the next age better for the last?
Is earth too poor to give us 70
Something to live for here that shall outlive
us?
Some more substantial boon
Than such as flows and ebbs with Fortune's
fickle moon?
The little that we see
From doubt is never free;
The little that we do
Is but half-nobly true;
With our laborious hiving
What men call treasure, and the gods call dross, 80
Life seems a jest of Fate's contriving,
Only secure in every one's conniving,
A long account of nothings paid with loss,
Where we poor puppets, jerked by unseen wires,
After our little hour of strut and rave,
With all our pasteboard passions and desires,
Loves, hates, ambitions, and immortal fires,
Are tossed pell-mell together in the grave.
But stay! no age was e'er degenerate,
Unless men held it at too cheap a rate,
For in our likeness still we shape our fate. 90
Ah, there is something here
Unfathomed by the cynic's sneer,
Something that gives our feeble light
A high immunity from Night,
Something that leaps life's narrow bars
To claim its birthright with the hosts of heaven,
A seed of sunshine that can leaven

Our earthly dullness with the beams of stars,
 And glorify our clay
 With light from fountains elder than the Day; 100
 A conscience more divine than we,
 A gladness fed with secret tears,
 A vexing, forward-reaching sense
 Of some more noble permanence;
 A light across the sea,
 Which haunts the soul and will not let it be.
 Still beaconing from the heights of undegenerate
 years.

v

Whither leads the path
 To ampler fates that leads?
 Not down through flowery meads, 110
 To reap an aftermath
 Of youth's vainglorious weeds,
 But up the steep, amid the wrath
 And shock of deadly-hostile creeds,
 Where the world's best hope and stay
 By battle's flashes gropes a desperate way.
 And every turf the fierce foot clings to bleeds.
 Peace hath her not ignoble wreath,
 Ere yet the sharp, decisive word
 Light the black lips of cannon, and the sword 120
 Dreams in its easeful sheath;
 But some day the live coal behind the thought,
 Whether from Baäl's stone obscene,
 Or from the shrine serene
 Of God's pure altar brought,
 Bursts up in flame; the war of tongue and pen
 Learns with what deadly purpose it was fraught,
 And, helpless in the fiery passion caught,
 Shakes all the pillared state with shock of men:
 Some day the soft Ideal that we wooed 130
 Confronts us fiercely, foe-beset, pursued,
 And cries reproachful: "Was it, then, my praise,
 And not myself was loved? Prove now thy
 truth;
 I claim of thee the promise of thy youth;
 Give me thy life, or cower in empty phrase,
 The victim of thy genius, not its mate!"
 Life may be given in many ways,
 And loyalty to Truth be sealed
 As bravely in the closet as the field,
 So bountiful is Fate;
 But then to stand beside her,
 When craven churls deride her,

To front a lie in arms and not to yield,
 This shows, methinks, God's plan
 And measure of a stalwart man,
 Limbed like the old heroic breeds,
 Who stands self-poised on manhood's solid
 earth,
 Not forced to frame excuses for his birth.
 Fed from within with all the strength he needs.

vi

Such was he, our Martyr-Chief,⁸⁸ 150
 Whom late the Nation he had led,
 With ashes on her head.
 Wept with the passion of an angry grief:
 Forgive me, if from present things I turn
 To speak what in my heart will beat and burn,
 And hang my wreath on his world-honored urn.
 Nature, they say, doth dote,
 And cannot make a man
 Save on some worn-out plan,
 Repeating us by rote: 160
 For him her Old-World moulds aside she threw,
 And, choosing sweet clay from the breast
 Of the unexhausted West,
 With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,
 Wise, steadfast in the strength of God, and true.
 How beautiful to see
 Once more a shepherd of mankind indeed,
 Who loved his charge, but never loved to lead;
 One whose meek flock the people joyed to be,
 Not lured by any cheat of birth, 170
 But by his clear-grained human worth,
 And brave old wisdom of sincerity!
 They knew that outward grace is dust;
 They could not choose but trust
 In that sure-footed mind's unfaltering skill,
 And supple-tempered will
 That bent like perfect steel to spring again and
 thrust.
 His was no lonely mountain-peak of mind,
 Thrusting to thin air o'er our cloudy bars,
 A sea-mark now, now lost in vapors blind; 180
 Broad prairie rather, genial, level-lined,
 Fruitful and friendly for all human kind,
 Yet also nigh to heaven and loved of loftiest stars.
 Nothing of Europe here,
 Or, then, of Europe fronting mornward still,
 Ere any names of Serf and Peer

⁸⁸ Lincoln.

Could Nature's equal scheme deface
And thwart her genial will,
Here was a type of the true elder race,
And one of Plutarch's ⁸⁹ men talked with us face
to face

I praise him not, it were too late,
And some innate weakness there must be
In him who condescends to victory
Such as the Present gives, and cannot wait,
Safe in himself as in a fate
So always firmly he
He knew to bide his time,
And can his fame abide,
Still patient in his simple faith sublime,
Till the wise years decide
Great captains, with their guns and drums,
Disturb our judgment for the hour,
But at last silence comes,
These all are gone, and, standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame
The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame
New birth of our new soil, the first American

VII

Long as man's hope insatiate can discern
Or only guess some more inspiring goal
Outside of Self, enduring as the pole,
Along whose course the flying axles burn
Of spirits bravely-pitched, earth's manlier brood,
Long as below we cannot find
The meed that stills the inexorable mind;
So long this faith to some ideal Good,
Under whatever mortal names it masks,
Freedom, Law, Country, this ethereal mood
That thanks the Fates for their severer tasks,
Feeling its challenged pulses leap,
While others skulk in subterfuges cheap,
And, set in Danger's van, has all the boon it asks,
Shall win man's praise and woman's love,
Shall be a wisdom that we set above
All other skills and gifts to culture dear,
A virtue round whose forehead we inwreath
Laurels that with a living passion breathe
When other crowns grow, while we twine them,
sear.
What brings us thronging these high rites to
pay,

⁸⁹ Famous Greek biographer

And seal these hours the noblest of our year, 230
Save that our brothers found this better way?

VIII

We sit here in the Promised Land
That flows with Freedom's honey and milk, ⁹⁰
But 't was they won it, sword in hand,
Making the nettle danger soft for us as silk
We welcome back our bravest and our best,—
Ah me! not all! some come not with the rest,
Who went forth brave and bright as any here!
I strive to mix some gladness with my strain,
But the sad strings complain, 240
And will not please the ear
I sweep them for a pæan, but they wane
Again and yet again
Into a dirge, and die away, in pain
In these brave ranks I only see the gaps,
Thinking of dear ones whom the dumb turf wraps,
Dark to the triumph which they died to gain
Fitter may others greet the living,
For me the past is unforgiving;
I with uncovered head 250
Salute the sacred dead,

Who went, and who return not.—Say not so!
'T is not the grapes of Canaan ⁹¹ that repay,
But the high faith that failed not by the way,
Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave,
No ban of endless night exiles the brave,
And to the saner mind

We rather seem the dead that stayed behind
Blow, trumpets, all your exultations blow!
For never shall their aureoled presence lack. 260
I see them muster in a gleaming row,
With ever-youthful brows that nobler show;
We find in our dull road their shining track,
In every nobler mood
We feel the onent of their spirit glow,
Part of our life's unalterable good,
Of all our saintlier aspiration;

They come transfigured back,
Secure from change in their high-hearted ways,
Beautiful evermore, and with the rays 270
Of morn on their white Shields of Expectation!

IX

But is there hope to save
Even this ethereal essence from the grave?

⁹⁰ Cf. Exodus III.8 and XIII.5, Numbers XIII.27.

⁹¹ Cf. Numbers XIII.24-27.

What ever 'scaped Oblivion's subtle wrong
Save a few clarion names, or golden threads of
song?

Before my musing eye

The mighty ones of old sweep by,
Disvoicèd now and insubstantial things,
As noisy once as we; poor ghosts of kings,
Shadows of empire wholly gone to dust, 280
And many races, nameless long ago,
To darkness driven by that imperious gust
Of ever-rushing Time that here doth blow:
O visionary world, condition strange,
Where naught abiding is but only Change,
Where the deep-bolted stars themselves still shift
and range!

Shall we to more continuance make pretence?
Renown builds tombs; a life-estate is Wit;

And, bit by bit,
The cunning years steal all from us but woes;
Leaves are we, whose decays no harvest sow. 290

But, when we vanish hence,
Shall they lie forceless in the dark below,
Save to make green their little length of sods,
Or deepen pansies for a year or two,
Who now to us are shining-sweet as gods?
Was dying all they had the skill to do?
That were not fruitless: but the Soul
resents

Such short-lived service, as if blind events
Ruled without her, or earth could so endure;
She claims a more divine investiture 300
Of longer tenure than Fame's airy rents;
Whate'er she touches doth her nature share;
Her inspiration haunts the ennobled air,

Gives eyes to mountains blind,
Ears to the deaf earth, voices to the wind,
And her clear trump sings succor everywhere
By lonely bivouacs to the wakeful mind;
For soul inherits all that soul could dare:

Yea, Manhood hath a wider span
And larger privilege of life than man. 310
The single deed, the private sacrifice,
So radiant now through proudly-hidden tears,
Is covered up erelong from mortal eyes
With thoughtless drift of the deciduous years;
But that high privilege that makes all men
peers,

That leap of heart whereby a people rise
Up to a noble anger's height,

And, flamed on by the Fates, not shrink, but grow
more bright,
That swift validity in noble veins,
Of choosing danger and disdaining shame, 320
Of being set on flame
By the pure fire that flies all contact base
But wraps its chosen with angelic might,
These are imperishable gains,
Sure as the sun, medicinal as light,
These hold great futures in their lusty reins
And certify to earth a new imperial race.

x

Who now shall sneer?
Who dare again to say we trace
Our lines to a plebeian race? 330
Roundhead and Cavalier! ⁹²

Dumb are those names erewhile in battle loud;
Dream-footed as the shadow of a cloud,

They flit across the ear:
That is best blood that hath most iron in 't.
To edge resolve with, pouring without stint
For what makes manhood dear.

Tell us not of Plantagenets, ⁹³
Hapsburgs, ⁹⁴ and Guelfs, ⁹⁵ whose thin bloods
crawl

Down from some victor in a border-brawl! 340

How poor their outworn coronets,
Matched with one leaf of that plain civic wreath
Our brave for honor's blazon shall bequeath,
Through whose desert a rescued Nation sets
Her heel on treason, and the trumpet hears
Shout victory, tingling Europe's sullen ears
With vain resentments and more vain regrets!

xi

Not in anger, not in pride,
Pure from passion's mixture rude
Ever to base earth allied, 350
But with far-heard gratitude,
Still with heart and voice renewed,
To heroes living and dear martyrs dead,
The strain should close that consecrates our brave.
Lift the heart and lift the head!
Lofty be its mood and grave,

⁹² Puritans were called "Roundheads" because they cut their hair short; Cavaliers supported Charles I in the British Civil War.

⁹³ Henry II (English) first of the house.

⁹⁴ Once rulers of Holy Roman Empire.

⁹⁵ Pope's party in medieval Italy.

Not without a martial ring,
 Not without a prouder tread
 And a peal of exultation
 Little right has he to sing 360
 Through whose heart in such an hour
 Beats no march of conscious power,
 Sweeps no tumult of elation!
 'T is no Man we celebrate,
 By his country's victories great,
 A hero half, and half the whim of Fate,
 But the pith and marrow of a Nation
 Drawing force from all her men,
 Highest, humblest, weakest, all,
 For her time of need and then 370
 Pulsing it again through them,
 Till the basest can no longer cower,
 Feeling his soul spring up divinely tall,
 Touched but in passing by her mantle-hem
 Come back, then, noble pride, for 't is her
 dower!
 How could poet ever tower,
 If his passions, hopes, and fears,
 If his triumphs and his tears,
 Kept not measure with his people?
 Boom, cannon, boom to all the winds and
 waves! 380
 Clash out, glad bells, from every rocking steeple!
 Banners, adance with triumph, bend your staves!
 And from every mountain-peak
 Let beacon-fire to answering beacon speak,
 Katahdin tell Monadnock, Whiteface ⁹⁶ he,
 And so leap on in light from sea to sea,
 Till the glad news be sent
 Across a kindling continent,
 Making earth feel more firm and air breathe
 braver.
 "Be proud! for she is saved, and all have helped
 to save her! 390
 She that lifts up the manhood of the poor,
 She of the open soul and open door,

⁹⁶ Mountains in Maine, New Hampshire, and New York, respectively.

With room about her hearth for all man-
 kind!
 The fire is dreadful in her eyes no more,
 From her bold front the helm she doth
 unbind,
 Sends all her handmaid armies back to spin,
 And bids her navies, that so lately hurled
 Their crashing battle, hold their thunders in,
 Swimming like birds of calm along the un-
 harmful shore.
 No challenge sends she to the elder world, 400
 That looked askance and hated, a light scorn
 Plays o'er her mouth, as round her mighty
 knees
 She calls her children back, and waits the
 morn
 Of nobler day, enthroned between her subject
 seas "

XII

Bow down, dear Land, for thou hast found release!
 Thy God, in these distempered days,
 Hath taught thee the sure wisdom of His ways,
 And through thine enemies hath wrought thy
 peace!
 Bow down in prayer and praise!
 No poorest in thy borders but may now 410
 Lift to the juster skies a man's enfranchised brow
 O Beautiful! my Country! ours once more!
 Smoothing thy gold of war-dishevelled hair
 O'er such sweet brows as never other wore,
 And letting thy set lips,
 Freed from wrath's pale eclipse,
 The rosy edges of their smile lay bare,
 What words divine of lover or of poet
 Could tell our love and make thee know it,
 Among the Nations bright beyond compare? 420
 What were our lives without thee?
 What all our lives to save thee?
 We reck not what we gave thee;
 We will not dare to doubt thee,
 But ask whatever else, and we will dare!
 1865 1868, 1876

*Credidimus Jovem Regnare*⁹⁷

O days endeared to every Muse,
 When nobody had any Views,
 Nor, while the cloudscape of his mind
 By every breeze was new designed,
 Insisted all the world should see
 Camels or whales where none there be!⁹⁸
 O happy days, when men received
 From sire to son what all believed,
 And left the other world in bliss,
 Too busy with bedevilling this!

Beset by doubts of every breed
 In the last bastion of my creed,
 With shot and shell for Sabbath-chime,
 I watch the storming-party climb,
 Panting (their prey in easy reach),
 To pour triumphant through the breach
 In walls that shed like snowflakes tons
 Of missiles from old-fashioned guns,
 But crumble 'neath the storm that pours
 All day and night from bigger bores.
 There, as I hopeless watch and wait
 The last life-crushing coil of Fate,
 Despair finds solace in the praise
 Of those serene dawn-rosy days
 Ere microscopes had made us heirs
 To large estates of doubts and snares,
 By proving that the title-deeds,
 Once all-sufficient for men's needs,
 Are palimpsests that scarce disguise
 The tracings of still earlier lies,
 Themselves as surely written o'er
 An older fib erased before.

So from these days I fly to those
 That in the landlocked Past repose.
 Where no rude wind of doctrine shakes
 From bloom-flushed boughs untimely flakes.
 Where morning's eyes see nothing strange.
 No crude perplexity of change,
 And morrows trip along their ways
 Secure as happy yesterdays.

Then there were rulers who could trace
 Through heroes up to gods their race,
 Pledged to fair fame and noble use
 By veins from Odin filled or Zeus,
 And under bonds to keep divine
 The praise of a celestial line.
 Then priests could pile the altar's sods,
 With whom gods spake as they with gods,
 And everywhere from haunted earth
 Broke springs of wonder, that had birth
 In depths divine beyond the ken
 And fatal scrutiny of men;
 Then hills and groves and streams and seas
 Thrilled with immortal presences,
 Not too ethereal for the scope
 Of human passion's dream or hope.

Now Pan⁹⁹ at last is surely dead,
 And King No-Credit reigns instead,
 Whose officers, morosely strict,
 Poor Fancy's tenantry evict,
 Chase the last Genius from the door,
 And nothing dances any more.
 Nothing? Ah, yes, our tables do,
 Drumming the Old One's own tattoo,
 And, if the oracles are dumb,
 Have we not mediums? Why be glum?

Fly thither? Why, the very air
 Is full of hindrance and despair!
 Fly thither? But I cannot fly;
 My doubts enmesh me if I try,
 Each Liliputian,¹⁰⁰ but, combined,
 Potent a giant's limbs to bind.
 This world and that are growing dark;
 A huge interrogation mark,
 The Devil's crook episcopal,
 Still borne before him since the Fall,
 Blackens with its ill-omened sign
 The old blue heaven of faith benign.
 Whence? Whither? Wherefore? How?
 Which? Why?
 All ask at once, all wait reply.

⁹⁷ Title: "We believe that Jove reigned," Horace, *Carmina*, III, 5, 1. Lowell himself translated the title as, "We used to think God reigned,"—*New Letters of James Russell Lowell*, p. 301. First published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1887. Collected in *Heartsease and Rue* (1888).

⁹⁸ Cf. *Hamlet* III, iii, 395-400.

⁹⁹ God of pastures and flocks. Plutarch records that at the hour of the crucifixion Greek sailors heard the cry, "Great Pan is dead."

¹⁰⁰ Gulliver, in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, was bound by the little people while he slept.

Men feel old systems cracking under 'em,
Life saddens to a mere conundrum
Which once Religion solved but she
Has lost—has Science found?—the key

What was snow-bearded Odin, trow,
The mighty hunter long ago,
Whose horn and hounds the peasant hears
Still when the Northlights shake their spears? ¹⁰¹
Science hath answers twain, I've heard, ⁹⁰
Choose which you will, nor hope a third,
Whichever box the truth be stowed in,
There's not a sliver left of Odin.
Either he was a pinchbrowed thing,
With scarcely wit a stone to fling,
A creature both in size and shape
Nearer than we are to the ape,
Who hung sublime with brat and spouse
By tail prehensile from the boughs,
And, happier than his maimed descendants, ¹⁰⁰
The culture-curtailed independents,
Could pluck his cherries with both paws,
And stuff with both his big-boned jaws;
Or else the core his name enveloped
Was from a solar myth developed,
Which, hunted to its primal shoot,
Takes refuge in a Sanskrit root,
Thereby to instant death explaining,
The little poetry remaining.

Try it with Zeus, 't is just the same, ¹¹⁰
The thing evades, we hug a name,
Nay, scarcely that,—perhaps a vapor
Born of some atmospheric caper
All Lempriere's fables blur together
In cloudy symbols of the weather,
And Aphrodite rose from frothy seas
But to illustrate such hypotheses.
With years enough behind his back,
Lincoln will take the selfsame track,
And prove, hulled fairly to the cob, ¹²⁰
A mere vagary of Old Prob
Give the right man a solar myth,
And he'll confute the sun therewith

They make things admirably plain,
But one hard question will remain.
If one hypothesis you lose,

¹⁰¹ According to Norse mythology the aurora borealis is the result of Odin's shaking his spear

Another in its place you choose,
But, your faith gone, O man and brother,
Whose shop shall furnish you another?
One that will wash, I mean, and wear, ¹³⁰
And wrap us warmly from despair?
While they are clearing up our puzzles,
And clapping prophylactic muzzles
On the Actæon's hounds that sniff
Our devious track through But and If,
Would they'd explain away the Devil
And other facts that won't keep level,
But rise beneath our feet or fail,
A reeling ship's deck in a gale!
God vanished long ago, I wis, ¹⁴⁰
A mere subjective synthesis,
A doll, stuffed out with hopes and fears,
Too homely for us pretty dears,
Who want one that conviction carries,
Last make of London or of Paris.
He gone, I felt a moment's spasm,
But calmed myself with Protoplasm,
A finer name, and, what is more,
As enigmatic as before,
Greek, too, and sure to fill with ease ¹⁵⁰
Minds caught in the Symplegades
Of soul and sense, life's two conditions,
Each baffled with its own omniscience
The men who labor to revise
Our Bibles will, I hope, be wise,
And print it without foolish qualms
Instead of God in David's psalms.
Noll had been more effective far
Could he have shouted at Dunbar,
"Rise, Protoplasm!" No dourest Scot ¹⁶⁰
Had waited for another shot.

And yet I frankly must confess
A secret unforgiveness,
And shudder at the saving chrism
Whose best New Birth is Pessimism;
My soul—I mean the bit of phosphorus
That fills the place of what that was for us—
Can't bid its inward bores defiance
With the new nursery-tales of science.
What profits me, though doubt by doubt, ¹⁷⁰
As nail by nail, be driven out,
When every new one, like the last,
Still holds my coffin-lid as fast?
Would I find thought a moment's truce,

Give me the young world's Mother Goose
With life and joy in every limb,
The chimney-corner tales of Grimm!

Our dear and admirable Huxley
Cannot explain to me why ducks lay,
Or, rather, how into their eggs
Blunder potential wings and legs
With will to move them and decide
Whether in air or lymph to glide.
Who gets a hair's-breadth on by showing
That Something Else set all agoing?
Farther and farther back we push
From Moses and his burning bush;
Cry, "Art Thou there?" Above, below,
All Nature mutters *yes* and *no*!
'T is the old answer: we're agreed
Being from Being must proceed,
Life be Life's source. I might as well
Obey the meeting-house's bell,
And listen while Old Hundred pours
Forth through the summer-opened doors,
From old and young. I hear it yet,
Swelled by bass-viol and clarinet,
While the gray minister, with face
Radiant, let loose his noble bass.
If Heaven it reached not, yet its roll
Waked all the echoes of the soul,
And in it many a life found wings
To soar away from sordid things.
Church gone and singers too, the song
Sings to me voiceless all night long,
Till my soul beckons me afar,
Glowing and trembling like a star.
Will any scientific touch
With my worn strings achieve as much?

180

190

200

I don't object, not I, to know
My sires were monkeys, if 't was so;
I touch my ear's collusive tip
And own the poor-relationship.
That apes of various shapes and sizes
Contained their germs that all the prizes
Of senate, pulpit, camp, and bar win
May give us hopes that sweeten Darwin.
Who knows but from our loins may spring
(Long hence) some winged sweet-throated
thing

210

As much superior to us
As we to Cynocephalus?

220

This is consoling, but alas,
It wipes no dimness from the glass
Where I am flattening my poor nose,
In hope to see beyond my toes.
Though I accept my pedigree,
Yet where, pray tell me, is the key
That should unlock a private door
To the Great Mystery, such no more?
Each offers his, but one nor all
Are much persuasive with the wall
That rises now, as long ago,
Between I wonder and I know,
Nor will vouchsafe a pin-hole peep
At the veiled Isis in its keep.
Where is no door, I but produce
My key to find it of no use.
Yet better keep it, after all,
Since Nature's economical,
And who can tell but some fine day
(If it occur to her) she may,
In her good-will to you and me,
Make door and lock to match the key?

230

240

1887

*Tempora Mutantur*¹⁰²

The world turns mild; democracy, they say,
Rounds the sharp knobs of character away,
And no great harm, unless at grave expense
Of what needs edge of proof, the moral sense;
For man or race is on the downward path

Whose fibre grows too soft for honest wrath,
And there's a subtle influence that springs
From words to modify our sense of things.
A plain distinction grows obscure of late:
Man, if he will, may pardon; but the State
Forgets its function if not fixed as Fate.
So thought our sires: a hundred years ago,
If men were knaves, why, people called them so,
And crime could see the prison-portal bend

10

¹⁰² "Times have changed." Lowell wrote this poem soon after returning from Europe and printed it in the *Nation*. Readers, thinking the poet too critical of democracy, wrote angry protests, and Lowell attempted to restate his position in a letter printed in the *Century* for November, 1891.

Its brow severe at no long vista's end
 In those days for plain things plain words would
 serve,
 Men had not learned to admire the graceful
 swerve
 Wherewith the Æsthetic Nature's genial mood
 Makes public duty slope to private good,
 No muddled conscience raised the saving doubt,
 A soldier proved unworthy was drummed out, 20
 An officer cashiered, a civil servant
 (No matter though his piety were fervent)
 Disgracefully dismissed, and through the land
 Each bore for life a stigma from the brand
 Whose far-heard hiss made others more averse
 To take the facile step from bad to worse
 The Ten Commandments had a meaning then,
 Felt in their bones by least considerate men,
 Because behind them Public Conscience stood,
 And without wincing made their mandates good 30
 But now that "Statesmanship" is just a way
 To dodge the primal curse and make it pay,
 Since office means a kind of patent drill
 To force an entrance to the Nation's till,
 And peculation something rather less
 Risky than if you spelt it with an s,
 Now that to steal by law is grown an art,
 Whom rogues the sires, their mulder sons call
 smart,
 And "slightly irregular" dilutes the shame
 Of what had once a somewhat blunter name 40
 With generous curve we draw the moral line
 Our swindlers are permitted to resign,
 Their guilt is wrapped in defeciential names,
 And twenty sympathize for one that blames
 Add national disgrace to private crime,

Confront mankind with brazen front sublime,
 Steal but enough, the world is unsevere,—
 Tweed ¹⁰³ is a statesman, Fisk ¹⁰⁴ a financier,
 Invent a mine, and be—the Lord knows what,
 Secure, at any rate, with what you've got 50
 The public servant who has stolen or lied,
 If called on, may resign with honest pride
 An unjust favor put him in, why doubt
 Disfavor as unjust has turned him out?
 Even if indicted, what is that but fudge
 To him who counted-in the elective judge?
 Whitewashed, he quits the politician's strife
 At ease in mind, with pockets filled for life
 His "lady" glares with gems whose vulgar blaze
 The poor man through his heightened taxes pays, 60
 Himself content if one huge Kohinoor ¹⁰⁵
 Bulge from a shirt-front ampler than before,
 But not too candid, lest it haply tend
 To rouse suspicion of the People's Friend.
 A public meeting, treated at his cost,
 Resolves him back more virtue than he lost;
 With character regilt he counts his gains,
 What's gone was air, the solid good remains,
 For what is good, except what friend and foe
 Seem quite unanimous in thinking so, 70
 The stocks and bonds which, in our age of loans,
 Replace the stupid pagan's stocks and stones?
 With choker white, wherein no cynic eye
 Dares see idealized a hempen tie,
 At parish-meetings he conducts in prayer,
 And pays for missions to be sent elsewhere;
 On 'Change respected, to his friends endeared,
 Add but a Sunday-school-class, he's revered,
 And his too early tomb will not be dumb
 To point a moral for our youth to come 80

1887

Emerson the Lecturer ¹⁰⁶

It is a singular fact that Mr Emerson is the most steadily attractive lecturer in America. Into that somewhat cold-watersh region adventurers of the sensational kind come down now and then with a

¹⁰³ William Marcy Tweed (1823-78), New York political boss, twice convicted and imprisoned for graft, died in Ludlow Street Jail, New York City

¹⁰⁴ James Fisk (1834-72), stock-market speculator, who caused a financial panic in 1868-69.

¹⁰⁵ Famous diamond surrendered to the British in the annexation of Punjab, India, 1847.

splash, to become disregarded King Logs ¹⁰⁷ before the next season. But Mr. Emerson always draws. A lecturer now for something like a third of a century, one of the pioneers of the lecturing system, the

¹⁰⁶ Published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1861, as a review of Emerson's *The Conduct of Life*, revised in 1868 Lowell met Emerson in Concord while he was being "rusticated" from Harvard, and he had heard him lecture the previous year

¹⁰⁷ In one of Aesop's fables the frogs petition Jupiter for a king. They are sent a log, which they accept until they learn its true nature.

charm of his voice, his manner, and his matter has never lost its power over his earlier hearers, and continually winds new ones in its enchanting meshes. What they do not fully understand they take on trust, and listen, saying to themselves, as the old poet ¹⁰⁸ of Sir Philip Sidney,—

A sweet, attractive, kind of grace,
A full assurance given by looks,
Continual comfort in a face,
The lineaments of gospel books.

We call it a singular fact, because we Yankees are thought to be fond of the spread-eagle style, and nothing can be more remote from that than his. We are reckoned a practical folk, who would rather hear about a new air-tight stove than about Plato; yet our favorite teacher's practicality is not in the least of the Poor Richard variety. If he have any Buncombe constituency, it is that unrealized commonwealth of philosophers which Plotinus proposed to establish; ²⁰ and if he were to make an almanac, his directions to farmers would be something like this: "OCTOBER: *Indian Summer*; now is the time to get in your early Vedas." What, then, is his secret? Is it not that he out-Yankees us all? that his range includes us all? that he is equally at home with the potato-disease and original sin, with pegging shoes, and the Over-Soul? that, as we try all trades, so has he tried all cultures? and above all, that his mysticism gives us a counterpoise to our super-practicality?

There is no man living to whom, as a writer, so many of us feel and thankfully acknowledge so great an indebtedness for ennobling impulses,—none whom so many cannot abide. What does he mean? ask these last. Where is his system? What is the use of it all? What the deuce have we to do with Brahma? I do not propose to write an essay on Emerson at this time. I will only say that one may find grandeur and consolation in a starlit night without caring to ask what it means, save grandeur and consolation; one may like Montaigne, as some ten generations before us have done, without thinking him so systematic as some more eminently tedious (or shall we say tediously eminent?) authors; one may think roses as good in their way as cabbages, though the latter would make a better show in the witness-box, if cross-examined as to their usefulness;

and as for Brahma, why, he can take care of himself, and won't bite us at any rate.

The bother with Mr. Emerson is, that, though he writes in prose, he is essentially a poet. If you undertake to paraphrase what he says, and to reduce it to words of one syllable for infant minds, you will make as sad work of it as the good monk with his analysis of Homer in the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*. ¹⁰⁹ We look upon him as one of the few men ¹⁰ of genius whom our age has produced, and there needs no better proof of it than his masculine faculty of fecundating other minds. Search for his eloquence in his books and you will perchance miss it, but meanwhile you will find that it has kindled all your thoughts. For choice and pith of language he belongs to a better age than ours, and might rub shoulders with Fuller and Browne,—though he does use that abominable word *reliable*. His eye for a fine, telling phrase that will carry true is like that of a back-woodsman for a rifle; and he will dredge you up a choice word from the mud of Cotton Mather himself. A diction at once so rich and so homely as his I know not where to match in these days of writing by the page; it is like homespun cloth-of-gold. The many cannot miss his meaning, and only the few can find it. It is the open secret of all true genius. It is wholesome to angle in those profound pools, though one be rewarded with nothing more than the leap of a fish that flashes his freckled side in the sun and as ³⁰ suddenly absconds in the dark and dreamy waters again. There is keen excitement, though there be no ponderable acquisition. If we carry nothing home in our baskets, there is ample gain in dilated lungs and stimulated blood. What does he mean, quotha? He means inspiring hints, a divining-rod to your deeper nature. No doubt, Emerson, like all original men, has his peculiar audience, and yet I know none that can hold a promiscuous crowd in pleased attention so long as he. As in all original men, there is something for every palate. "Would you know," says Goethe, "the ripest cherries? Ask the boys and the blackbirds."

The announcement that such a pleasure as a new course of lectures by him is coming, to people as old as I am, is something like those forebodings of spring that prepare us every year for a familiar novelty, none the less novel, when it arrives, because it is familiar.

¹⁰⁸ Matthew Roydon, in an "Elegie" to Sidney, in *The Phoenix Nest* (1593).

¹⁰⁹ "Letters of Obscure Men," sixteenth century, authorship unknown.

We know perfectly well what we are to expect from Mr Emerson, and yet what he says always penetrates and stirs us, as is apt to be the case with genius, in a very unlooked-for fashion. Perhaps genius is one of the few things which we gladly allow to repeat itself,—one of the few that multiply rather than weaken the force of their impression by iteration? Perhaps some of us hear more than the mere words, are moved by something deeper than the thoughts? If it be so, we are quite right, for it is thirty years and more of “plain living and high thinking”¹¹⁰ that speak to us in this altogether unique lay-preacher. We have shared in the beneficence of this varied culture, this fearless impartiality in criticism and speculation, this masculine sincerity, this sweetness of nature which rather stimulates than cloy, for a generation long. If ever there was a standing testimonial to the cumulative power and value of Character (and we need it sadly in these days), we have it in this gracious and dignified presence. What an antiseptic is a pure life! At sixty-five (or two years beyond his grand climacteric, as he would prefer to call it) he has that privilege of soul which abolishes the calendar, and presents him to us always the unwasted contemporary of his own prime. I do not know if he seem old to his younger hearers, but we who have known him so long wonder at the tenacity with which he maintains himself even in the outposts of youth. I suppose it is not the Emerson of 1868 to whom we listen. For us the whole life of the man is distilled in the clear drop of every sentence, and behind each word we divine the force of a noble character, the weight of a large capital of thinking and being. We do not go to hear what Emerson says so much as to hear Emerson. Not that we perceive any falling-off in anything that ever was essential to the charm of Mr Emerson’s peculiar style of thought or phrase. The first lecture, to be sure, was more disjointed even than common. It was as if, after vainly trying to get this paragraph into sequence and order, he had at last tried the desperate expedient of *shuffling* them. It was chaos come again, but it was a chaos full of shooting-stars, a jumble of creative forces. The second lecture, on “Criticism and Poetry,” was quite up to the level of old times, full of that power of strangely subtle association whose indirect approaches startle the mind into almost painful attention, of those flashes of mutual

understanding between speaker and hearer that are gone ere one can say it lightens. The vice of Emerson’s criticism seems to be, that while no man is so sensitive to what is poetical, few men are less sensible than he of what makes a poem. He values the solid meaning of thought above the subtler meaning of style. He would prefer Donne,¹¹¹ I suspect, to Spenser, and sometimes mistakes the queer for the original.

To be young is surely the best, if the most precarious, gift of life, yet there are some of us who would hardly consent to be young again, if it were at the cost of our recollection of Mr Emerson’s first lectures during the consulate¹¹² of Van Buren. We used to walk in from the country to the Masonic Temple (I think it was), through the crisp winter night, and listen to that thrilling voice of his, so charged with subtle meaning and subtle music, as shipwrecked men on a raft to the hail of a ship that came with un hoped-for food and rescue. Cynics might say what they liked. Did our own imaginations transfigure dry remainder-biscuit¹¹³ into ambrosia? At any rate, he brought us *life*, which, on the whole, is no bad thing. Was it all transcendentalism? magic-lantern pictures on mist? As you will. Those, then, were just what we wanted. But it was not so. The delight and the benefit were that he put us in communication with a larger style of thought, sharpened our wits with a more pungent phrase, gave us ravishing glimpses of an ideal under the dry husk of our New England, made us conscious of the supreme and everlasting originality of whatever bit of soul might be in any of us, freed us, in short, from the stocks of prose in which we had sat so long that we had grown well-nigh contented in our cramps. And who that saw the audience will ever forget it, where every one still capable of fire, or longing to renew in himself the half-forgotten sense of it, was gathered? Those faces, young and old, agleam with pale intellectual light, eager with pleased attention, flash upon me once more from the deep recesses of the years with an exquisite pathos. Ah, beautiful young eyes, brimming with love and hope, wholly vanished now in that other world we call the Past, or peering doubtfully through the pensive gloaming of memory, your light impoverishes these cheaper days! I hear

¹¹¹ The seventeenth-century English poet, John Donne, affected stylistic mannerisms in his “metaphysical” poetry. Donne did influence Emerson.

¹¹² Parody of method of Romans in dating by consulships.

¹¹³ *As You Like It*, II, vii, 39.

¹¹⁰ Cf. “Written in London,” Wordsworth’s sonnet (1802).

again that rustle of sensation, as they turned to exchange glances over some pithier thought, some keener flash of that humor which always played about the horizon of his mind like heat-lightning, and it seems now like the sad whisper of the autumn leaves that are whirling around me. But would my picture be complete if I forgot that ample and vegete countenance of Mr. R—— of W——,—how, from its regular post at the corner of the front bench, it turned in ruddy triumph to the profaner audience as if he were the inexplicably appointed fogleman of appreciation? I was reminded of him by those hearty cherubs in Titian's Assumption¹¹⁴ that look at you as who should say, "Did you ever see a Madonna like *that*? Did you ever behold one hundred and fifty pounds of womanhood mount heavenward before like a rocket?"

To some of us that long-past experience remains as the most marvellous and fruitful we have ever had. Emerson awakened us, saved us from the body of this death. It is the sound of the trumpet that the young soul longs for, careless what breath may fill it. Sidney heard it in the ballad of "Chevy Chase,"¹¹⁵ and we in Emerson. Nor did it blow retreat, but called to us with assurance of victory. Did they say he was disconnected? So were the stars, that seemed larger to our eyes, still keen with that excitement, as we walked homeward with prouder stride over the creaking snow. And were *they* not knit together by a higher logic than our mere sense could master? Were we enthusiasts? I hope and believe we were, and am thankful to the man who made us worth something for once in our lives. If asked what was left? what we carried home? we should not have been careful for an answer. It would have been enough if we had said that something beautiful had passed that way. Or we might have asked in return what one brought away from a symphony of Beethoven? Enough that he had set that ferment of wholesome discontent at work in us. There is one, at least, of those old hearers, so many of whom are now in the fruition of that intellectual beauty of which Emerson gave them both the desire and the foretaste, who will always love to repeat:—

"Che in la mente m' è fitta, ed or m' accuora
La cara e buona immagine paterna

¹¹⁴ Famous painting by Titian.

¹¹⁵ Sir Philip Sidney praised this old ballad in his *Defence of Poesy* (1595).

Di voi, quando nel mondo ad ora ad ora
M' insegnavaste come l' uom s' eterna."¹¹⁶

I am unconsciously thinking, as I write, of the third lecture of the present course, in which Mr. Emerson gave some delightful reminiscences of the intellectual influences in whose movement he had shared. It was like hearing Goethe read some passages of the *Wahrheit aus seinem Leben*.¹¹⁷ Not that there was not a little *Dichtung*,¹¹⁸ too, here and there, as the lecturer built up so lofty a pedestal under certain figures as to lift them into a prominence of obscurity, and seem to masthead them there. Everybody was asking his neighbor who this or that recondite great man was, in the faint hope that somebody might once have heard of him. There are those who call Mr. Emerson cold. Let them revise their judgment in presence of this loyalty of his that can keep warm for half a century, that never forgets a friendship, or fails to pay even a fancied obligation to the uttermost farthing. This substantiation of shadows was but incidental, and pleasantly characteristic of the man to those who know and love him. The greater part of the lecture was devoted to reminiscences of things substantial in themselves. He spoke of Everett, fresh from Greece and Germany; of Channing; of the translations of Margaret Fuller, Ripley, and Dwight; of the *Dial* and Brook Farm. To what he said of the latter an undertone of good-humored irony gave special zest. But what every one of his hearers felt was that the protagonist in the drama was left out. The lecturer was no Æneas to babble the *quorum magna pars fui*,¹¹⁹ and, as one of his listeners, I cannot help wishing to say how each of them was commenting the story as it went along, and filling up the necessary gaps in it from his own private store of memories. His younger hearers could not know how much they owed to the benign impersonality, the quiet scorn of everything ignoble, the never-sated hunger of self-culture, that were personified in the man before them. But the older knew how much the country's intellectual emancipation was due to the stimulus of his teach-

¹¹⁶ Dante's *Inferno*, XV, 82-85. Longfellow's translation reads:

"For in my mind is fixed, and touches now
My heart, the dear and good paternal image
Of you, when in the world from hour to hour
You taught me how a man becomes eternal."

¹¹⁷ "Truth Out of His Life," the full title of Goethe's autobiography was *Dichtung und Wahrheit aus meinem Leben*.

¹¹⁸ "Poetry"—cf. note 117 above.

¹¹⁹ *Æneid*, II, 6: "Of which things I was a great part."

ing and example, how constantly he had kept burning the beacon of an ideal life above our lower region of turmoil. To him more than to all other causes together did the young martyrs of our civil war owe the sustaining strength of thoughtful heroism that is so touching in every record of their lives. Those who are grateful to Mr Emerson, as many of us are, for what they feel to be most valuable in their culture, or perhaps I should say their impulse, are grateful not so much for any direct teachings of his as for that inspiring lift which only genius can give, and without which all doctrine is chaff.

This was something like the *caret* which some of us older boys wished to fill up on the margin of the master's lecture. Few men have been so much to so many, and through so large a range of aptitudes and temperaments, and this simply because all of us value manhood beyond any or all other qualities of character. We may suspect in him, here and there, a certain thinness and vagueness of quality, but let the waters go over him as they list, this masculine fibre of his will keep its lively color and its toughness of texture. I have heard some great speakers and some accomplished orators, but never any that so moved and persuaded men as he. There is a kind of undertow in that rich baritone of his that sweeps our minds from their foothold into deeper waters with a drift we cannot and would not resist. And how artfully (for Emerson is a long-studied artist in these things) does the deliberate utterance, that seems waiting for the fit word, appear to admit us partners in the labor of thought and make us feel as if the glance of humor were a sudden suggestion, as if the perfect phrase lying written there on the desk were as unexpected to him as to us! In that closely filed speech of his at the Burns centenary dinner, every word seemed to have just dropped down to him from the clouds. He looked far away over the heads of his hearers,

with a vague kind of expectation, as into some private heaven of invention, and the winged period came at last obedient to his spell. "My dainty Anel!"¹²⁰ he seemed murmuring to himself as he cast down his eyes as if in deprecation of the frenzy of approval and caught another sentence from the Sibylline leaves that lay before him, ambushed behind a dish of fruit and seen only by nearest neighbors. Every sentence brought down the house, as I never saw one brought down before,—and it is not so easy to hit Scotsmen with a sentiment that has no hint of native brogue in it. I watched, for it was an interesting study, how the quick sympathy ran flashing from face to face down the long tables, like an electric spark thrilling as it went, and then exploded in a thunder of plaudits. I watched till tables and faces vanished, for I, too, found myself caught up in the common enthusiasm, and my excited fancy set me under the *bema*¹²¹ listening to him who fulminated over Greece. I can never help applying to him what Ben Jonson said of Bacon: "There happened in my time one noble speaker, who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language was nobly censorious. No man ever spake more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered. No member of his speech but consisted of his own graces. His hearers could not cough, or look aside from him, without loss. He commanded where he spoke." Those who heard him while their natures were yet plastic, and their mental nerves trembled under the slightest breath of divine air, will never cease to feel and say —

Was never eye did see that face,
Was never ear did hear that tongue,
Was never mind did mind his grace,
That ever thought the travail long,
But eyes, and ears, and every thought,
Were with his sweet perfections caught.¹²²

1861

1868

Thoreau¹²³

What contemporary, if he was in the fighting period of his life, (since Nature sets limits about her conscription for spiritual fields, as the state does in physical warfare,) will ever forget what was some-

what vaguely called the "Transcendental Movement" of thirty years ago? Apparently set astir by Carlyle's essays on the *Signs of the Times*, and on *History*, the final and more immediate impulse seemed to be

¹²⁰ *Tempest*, V, 1, 95

¹²¹ "Rostrum"

¹²² Another quotation from Roydon's "Elegie" to Sidney.

¹²³ Published in *North American Review* in 1865, collected in *Prose Works*, vol. I. Lowell was temperamentally so different from Thoreau that he did not fully understand him.

given by *Sartor Resartus*. At least the republication in Boston of that wonderful Abraham à Sancta-Clara¹²⁴ sermon on Lear's text of the miserable forked radish¹²⁵ gave the signal for mental and moral mutiny: *Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile!*¹²⁶ was shouted on all hands with every variety of emphasis, and by voices of every conceivable pitch, representing the three sexes of men, women, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.¹²⁷ The nameless eagle of the tree Yggdrasil¹²⁸ was about to sit at last, and wild-eyed enthusiasts¹²⁹ rushed from all sides, each eager to thrust under the mystic bird that chalk egg from which the new and fairer Creation was to be hatched in due time. *Redeunt Saturnia regna*,¹²⁹—so far was certain, though in what shape, or by what methods, was still a matter of debate. Every possible form of intellectual and physical dyspepsia brought forth its gospel. Bran had its prophets, and the presartorial simplicity of Adam its martyrs, tailored impromptu from the tar-pot by incensed neighbors, and sent forth to illustrate the²⁰ "feathered Mercury," as defined by Webster and Worcester.¹³⁰ Plainness of speech was carried to a pitch that would have taken away the breath of George Fox,¹³¹ and even swearing had its evangelists, who answered a simple inquiry after their health with an elaborate ingenuity of imprecation that might have been honorably mentioned by Marlborough¹³² in general orders. Everybody had a mission (with a capital M) to attend to everybody-else's business. No brain but had its private maggot,³⁰ which must have found pitifully short commons sometimes. Not a few impecunious zealots abjured the use of money (unless earned by other people), professing to live on the internal revenues of the spirit. Some had an assurance of instant millennium so soon as hooks and eyes should be substituted for buttons. Communities were established where everything was to be common but common sense.

¹²⁴ Real name, Hans Ulrich Megerle (1644-1709), Augustinian monk, later court preacher at Vienna, and satirist.

¹²⁵ *Henry IV*, II, ii. Said by Falstaff instead of Lear.

¹²⁶ "Behold, now is the acceptable time."

¹²⁷ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), English poet and letter writer.

¹²⁸ The ash-tree in Scandinavian mythology that binds together heaven, earth, and hell. The eagle in the top and the serpent at the root are constantly at strife.

¹²⁹ "The Saturnian reign returns," i.e., the Golden Age.

¹³⁰ Noah Webster (1758-1843) and Joseph Emerson Worcester (1784-1865), rival New England lexicographers.

¹³¹ George Fox (1624-91), founder of Society of Friends.

¹³² John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722), English military commander.

Men renounced their old gods, and hesitated only whether to bestow their furloughed allegiance on Thor or Budh.¹³³ Conventions were held for every hitherto inconceivable purpose. The belated gift of tongues, as among the Fifth Monarchy men,¹³⁴ spread like a contagion, rendering its victims incomprehensible to all Christian men; whether equally so to the most distant possible heathen or not was unexperimented, though many would have subscribed liberally that a fair trial might be made. It was the pentecost of Shinar.¹³⁵ The day of utterances reproduced the day of rebuses and anagrams, and there was nothing so simple that uncial letters and the style of Diphilus the Labyrinth¹³⁶ could not make into a riddle. Many foreign revolutionists out of work added to the general misunderstanding their contribution of broken English in every most ingenious form of fracture. All stood ready at a moment's notice to reform everything but themselves. The general motto was:

And we'll talk with them, too,
And take upon's the mystery of things
As if we were God's spies.¹³⁷

Nature is always kind enough to give even her clouds a humorous lining. I have barely hinted at the comic side of the affair, for the material was endless. This was the whistle and trailing fuse of the shell, but there was a very solid and serious kernel, full of the most deadly explosiveness. Thoughtful men divined it, but the generality suspected nothing. The word "transcendental" then was the maid of all work for those who could not think, as "Pre-Raphaelite" has been more recently for people of the same limited housekeeping. The truth is, that there was a much nearer metaphysical relation and a much more distant aesthetic and literary relation between Carlyle and the Apostles of the Newness, as they were called in New England, than has commonly been supposed. Both represented the reaction and revolt against *Philisterei*,¹³⁸ a renewal of the old battle begun in

¹³³ Thor, Scandinavian god of thunder; Budh, variation of Buddha, the founder of the Buddhist religion.

¹³⁴ A sect of English fanatics in the time of Cromwell who believed that the four monarchies of ancient times would be succeeded by a fifth during which Christ would reign on earth for a thousand years.

¹³⁵ Genesis xi:1-8.

¹³⁶ Diphilus Labyrinthus, a Greek stoic philosopher of the third century B.C.

¹³⁷ *King Lear*, V, iii, 14-17.

¹³⁸ German students used this term for "outsiders"; Matthew Arnold also called the uncultured middle class "Philistines" this same year (1865) in a preface to *Essays in Criticism*, first series.

modern times by Erasmus and Reuchlin,¹³⁹ and continued by Lessing, Goethe, and, in a far narrower sense, by Heine in Germany, and of which Fielding, Sterne, and Wordsworth in different ways have been the leaders in England. It was simply a struggle for fresh air, in which, if the windows could not be opened, there was danger that panes would be broken, though painted with images of saints and martyrs. Light colored by these reverend effigies was none the more respirable for being picturesque. There is only one thing better than tradition, and that is the original and eternal life out of which all tradition takes its rise. It was this life which the reformers demanded, with more or less clearness of consciousness and expression, life in politics, life in literature, life in religion. Of what use to import a gospel from Judæa, if we leave behind the soul that made it possible, the God who keeps it forever real and present? Surely Abana and Pharpar¹⁴⁰ are better than Jordan, if a living faith be mixed with those waters and none with these.

Scotch Presbyterianism as a motive of spiritual progress was dead, New England Puritanism was in like manner dead, in other words, Protestantism had made its fortune and no longer protested, but till Carlyle spoke out in the Old World and Emerson in the New, no one had dared to proclaim, *Le roi est mort vive le roi!*¹⁴¹ The meaning of which proclamation was essentially this: the vital spirit has long since departed out of this form once so kingly, and the great seal has been in commission long enough, but meanwhile the soul of man, from which all power emanates and to which it reverts, still survives in undiminished royalty; God still survives, little as you gentlemen of the Commission seem to be aware of it, — nay, may possibly outlive the whole of you, incredible as it may appear. The truth is, that both Scotch Presbyterianism and New England Puritanism made their new avatar in Carlyle and Emerson, the heralds of their formal decease, and the tendency of the one toward Authority and of the other toward Independency might have been prophesied by whoever had studied history. The necessity was not so much in the men as in the principles they represented

and the traditions which overruled them. The Puritanism of the past found its unwilling poet in Hawthorne, the rarest creative imagination of the century, the rarest in some ideal respects since Shakespeare, but the Puritanism that cannot die, the Puritanism that made New England what it is, and is destined to make America what it should be, found its voice in Emerson. Though holding himself aloof from all active partnership in movements of reform, he has been the sleeping partner who has supplied a great part of their capital.

The artistic range of Emerson is narrow, as every well-read critic must feel at once, and so is that of Æschylus, so is that of Dante, so is that of Montaigne, so is that of Schiller, so is that of nearly every one except Shakespeare, but there is a gauge of height no less than of breadth, of individuality as well as of comprehensiveness, and, above all, there is the standard of genetic power, the test of the masculine as distinguished from the receptive minds. There are staminate plants in literature, that make no fine show of fruit, but without whose pollen, the quintessence of fructifying gold, the garden had been barren. Emerson's mind is emphatically one of these, and there is no man to whom our aesthetic culture owes so much. The Puritan revolt has made us ecclesiastically, and the Revolution politically independent, but we were still socially and intellectually moored to English thought, till Emerson cut the cable and gave us a chance at the dangers and the glories of blue water. No man young enough to have felt it can forget, or cease to be grateful for, the mental and moral *nudge* which he received from the writings of his high-minded and brave-spirited countryman. That we agree with him, or that he always agrees with himself, is aside from the question, but that he arouses in us something that we are the better for having awakened, whether that something be of opposition or assent, that he speaks always to what is highest and least selfish in us, few Americans of the generation younger than his own would be disposed to deny. His oration¹⁴² before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, some thirty years ago, was an event without any former parallel in our literary annals, a scene to be always treasured in the memory for its picturesqueness and its inspiration. What crowded and breathless aisles, what windows clustering with eager heads, what enthusiasm of approval, what grim silence of

¹³⁹ Desiderius Erasmus (1466?–1536), one of the leaders in the renaissance of learning in northern Europe, Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522), a German humanist.

¹⁴⁰ "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the rivers of Israel?" 2 Kings v 12.

¹⁴¹ "The King is dead long live the King!"

¹⁴² "The American Scholar."

foregone dissent! It was our Yankee version of a lecture by Abelard,¹⁴³ our Harvard parallel to the last public appearances of Schelling.¹⁴⁴

We said that the "Transcendental Movement" was the protestant spirit of Puritanism seeking a new outlet and an escape from forms and creeds which compressed rather than expressed it. In its motives, its preaching, and its results, it differed radically from the doctrine of Carlyle. The Scotchman, with all his genius, and his humor gigantesque as that of Rabelais, 10 has grown shriller and shriller with years, degenerating sometimes into a common scold, and emptying very unsavory vials of wrath on the head of the sturdy British Socrates of worldly common sense. The teaching of Emerson tended much more exclusively to self-culture and the independent development of the individual man. It seemed to many almost Pythagorean¹⁴⁵ in its voluntary seclusion from commonwealth affairs. Both Carlyle and Emerson were disciples of Goethe, but Emerson in a far truer sense; and while the one, 20 from his bias toward the eccentric, has degenerated more and more into mannerism, the other has clarified steadily toward perfection of style,—exquisite fineness of material, unobtrusive lowness of tone and simplicity of fashion, the most high-bred garb of expression. Whatever may be said of his thought, nothing can be finer than the delicious limpidness of his phrase. If it was ever questionable whether democracy could develop a gentleman, the problem has been affirmatively solved at last. Carlyle, in his cynicism and his admiration of force in and for itself, has 30 become at last positively inhuman; Emerson, reverencing strength, seeking the highest outcome of the individual, has found that society and politics are also main elements in the attainment of the desired end, and has drawn steadily manward and worldward. The two men represent respectively those grand personifications in the drama of Æschylus, Βία and Κράτος.¹⁴⁶

Among the pistillate plants kindled to fruitage by 40 the Emersonian pollen, Thoreau is thus far the most remarkable; and it is something eminently fitting that

¹⁴³ Peter F. Abelard (1079-1142) was one of the founders of the scholastic theology.

¹⁴⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854), a celebrated professor of philosophy in Germany.

¹⁴⁵ The followers of Pythagoras, a Greek philosopher of the sixth century B.C., formed a mystic cult, one of their doctrines being transmigration of the soul.

¹⁴⁶ The symbolical characters. "Power" and "Force," in *Prometheus Bound*. They carry Prometheus up the mountain and hold him while he is bound to the rock.

his posthumous works should be offered us by Emerson, for they are strawberries from his own garden. A singular mixture of varieties, indeed, there is;—alpine, some of them, with the flavor of rare mountain air; others wood, tasting of sunny roadside banks or shy openings in the forest; and not a few seedlings swollen hugely by culture, but lacking the fine natural aroma of the more modest kinds. Strange books these are of his, and interesting in many ways,—instructive chiefly as showing how considerable a crop may be raised on a comparatively narrow close¹⁴⁷ of mind, and how much a man may make of his life if he will assiduously follow it, though perhaps never truly finding it at last.

I have just been renewing my recollection of Mr. Thoreau's writings, and have read through six volumes in the order of their production. I shall try to give an adequate report of their impression upon me both as critic and as mere reader. He seems to me to have been a man with so high a conceit of himself that he accepted without questioning, and insisted on our accepting, his defects and weaknesses of character as virtues and powers peculiar to himself. Was he indolent, he finds none of the activities which attract or employ the rest of mankind worthy of him. Was he wanting in the qualities that make success, it is success that is contemptible, and not himself that lacks persistency and purpose. Was he poor, money was an unmixed evil. Did his life seem a selfish one, he condemns doing good as one of the weakest of superstitions. To be of use was with him the most killing bait of the wily tempter Uselessness. He had no faculty of generalization from outside of himself, or at least no experience which would supply the material of such, and he makes his own whim the law, his own range the horizon of the universe. He condemns a world, the hollowness of whose satisfactions he had never had the means of testing, and we recognize Apemantus¹⁴⁸ behind the mask of Timon. He had little active imagination; of the receptive he had much. His appreciation is of the highest quality; his critical power, from want of continuity of mind, very limited and inadequate. He somewhere cites a simile from Ossian,¹⁴⁹ as an example of the superiority

¹⁴⁷ Enclosed place, as land about a cathedral.

¹⁴⁸ A "churlish philosopher" in *Timon of Athens*, one of Shakespeare's minor plays.

¹⁴⁹ A half-legendary Gaelic bard (third century), whom James Macpherson purported to translate in *Fingal* (1761) and *Temora* (1763).

of the old poetry to the new, though, even were the historic evidence less convincing, the sentimental melancholy of those poems should be conclusive of their modernness. He had none of the artistic mastery such as controls a great work to the serene balance of completeness, but exquisite mechanical skill in the shaping of sentences and paragraphs, or (more rarely) short bits of verse for the expression of a detached thought, sentiment, or image. His works give one the feeling of a sky full of stars,—something impressive and exhilarating certainly, something high overhead and freckled thickly with spots of isolated brightness, but whether these have any mutual relation with each other, or have any concern with our mundane matters, is for the most part matter of conjecture,—astrology as yet, and not astronomy.

It is curious, considering what Thoreau afterwards became, that he was not by nature an observer. He only saw the things he looked for, and was less poet than naturalist. Till he built his Walden shanty, he did not know that the hickory grew in Concord. Till he went to Maine, he had never seen phosphorescent wood, a phenomenon early familiar to most country boys. At forty he speaks of the seeding of the pine as a new discovery, though one should have thought that its gold-dust of blowing pollen might have earlier drawn his eye. Neither his attention nor his genius was of the spontaneous kind. He discovered nothing. He thought everything a discovery of his own, from moonlight to the planting of acorns and nuts by squirrels. This is a defect in his character, but one of his chief charms as a writer. Everything grows fresh under his hand. He dived in his mind and nature; he planted them with all manner of native and foreign seeds, and reaped assiduously. He was not merely solitary, he would be isolated, and succeeded at last in almost persuading himself that he was autochthonous. He valued everything in proportion as he fancied it to be exclusively his own. He complains in *Walden* that there is no one in Concord with whom he could talk of Oriental literature, though the man was living within two miles of his hut who had introduced him to it. This intellectual selfishness becomes sometimes almost painful in reading him. He lacked that generosity of "communication" which Johnson admired in Burke. De Quincy tells us that Wordsworth was impatient when any one else spoke of mountains, as if he had a peculiar property in them. And we can readily understand why it should be so, no one is

satisfied with another's appreciation of his mistress. But Thoreau seems to have prized a lofty way of thinking (often we should be inclined to call it a remote one) not so much because it was good in itself as because he wished few to share it with him. It seems now and then as if he did not seek to lure others up "above our lower region of turmoil," but to leave his own name cut on the mountain peak as the first climber. This itch of originality infects his thought and style. To be misty is not to be mystic. He turns commonplaces end for end, and fancies it makes something new of them. As we walk down Park Street, our eye is caught by Dr. Winship's dumb-bells, one of which bears an inscription testifying that it is the heaviest ever put up at arm's length by any athlete, and in reading Mr. Thoreau's books we cannot help feeling as if he sometimes invited our attention to a particular sophism or paradox as the biggest yet maintained by any single writer. He seeks, at all risks, for perversity of thought, and revives the age of *conceits*¹⁵⁰ while he fancies himself going back to a pre-classical nature. "A day," he says, "passed in the society of those Greek sages, such as described in the Banquet of Xenophon, would not be comparable with the dry wit of decayed cranberry-vines and the fresh Attic salt of the moss-beds." It is not so much the True that he loves as the Out-of-the-Way. As the Brazen Age shows itself in other men by exaggeration of phrase, so in him by extravagance of statement. He wishes always to trump your suit and to *ruff* when you least expect it. Do you love Nature because she is beautiful? He will find a better argument in her ugliness. Are you tired of the artificial man? He instantly dresses you up an ideal in a Penobscot Indian, and attributes to this creature of his otherwise-mindedness as peculiarities things that are common to all woodsmen, white or red, and this simply because he has not studied the pale-faced variety.

This notion of an absolute originality, as if one could have a patent-right in it, is an absurdity. A man cannot escape in thought, any more than he can in language, from the past and the present. As no one ever invents a word, and yet language somehow grows by general contribution and necessity, so it is with thought. Mr. Thoreau seems to us to insist in public on going back to flint and steel, when there is a match-box in his pocket which he knows very well

¹⁵⁰ "Conceits," literary affectations.

how to use at a pinch. Originality consists in power of digesting and assimilating thoughts, so that they become part of our life and substance. Montaigne, for example, is one of the most original of authors, though he helped himself to ideas in every direction. But they turn to blood and coloring in his style, and give a freshness of complexion that is forever charming. In Thoreau much seems yet to be foreign and unassimilated, showing itself in symptoms of indigestion. A preacher-up of Nature, we now and then ¹⁰ detect under the surly and stoic garb something of the sophist and the sentimentalizer. I am far from implying that this was conscious on his part. But it is much easier for a man to impose on himself when he measures only with himself. A greater familiarity with ordinary men would have done Thoreau good, by showing him how many fine qualities are common to the race. The radical vice of his theory of life was, that he confounded physical with spiritual remoteness from men. A man is far enough withdrawn from ²⁰ his fellows if he keep himself clear of their weaknesses. He is not so truly withdrawn as exiled, if he refuse to share in their strength. It is a morbid self-consciousness that pronounces the world of men empty and worthless before trying it, the instinctive evasion of one who is sensible of some innate weakness, and retorts the accusation of it before any has made it but himself. To a healthy mind, the world is a constant challenge of opportunity. Mr. Thoreau had not a healthy mind, or he would not have been ³⁰ so fond of prescribing. His whole life was a search for the doctor. The old mystics had a wiser sense of what the world was worth. They ordained a severe apprenticeship to law and even ceremonial, in order to the gaining of freedom and mastery over these. Seven years of service for Rachel were to be rewarded at last with Leah.¹⁵¹ Seven other years of faithfulness with her were to win them at last the true bride of their souls. Active Life was with them the only path to the Contemplative.

Thoreau had no humor, and this implies that he was a sorry logician. Himself an artist in rhetoric, he confounds thought with style when he undertakes to speak of the latter. He was forever talking of getting away from the world, but he must be always near enough to it, nay, to the Concord corner of it, to feel the impression he makes there. He verifies the shrewd remark of Sainte-Beuve, "*On touche encore à son*

¹⁵¹ See Genesis xxix:18-30.

temps et très-fort, même quand on le repousse."¹⁵² This egotism of his is a Stylites pillar¹⁵³ after all, a seclusion which keeps him in the public eye. The dignity of man is an excellent thing, but therefore to hold one's self too sacred and precious is the reverse of excellent. There is something delightfully absurd in six volumes addressed to a world of such "vulgar fellows" as Thoreau affirmed his fellow-men to be. I once had a glimpse of a genuine solitary who spent his winters one hundred and fifty miles beyond all human communication, and there dwelt with his rifle, as his only confidant. Compared with this, the shanty on Walden Pond has something the air, it must be confessed, of the Hermitage of La Chevrete.¹⁵⁴ I do not believe that the way to a true cosmopolitanism carries one into the woods or the society of musquashes.¹⁵⁵ Perhaps the narrowest provincialism is that of Self; that of Kleinwinkel¹⁵⁶ is nothing to it. The natural man, like the singing birds, comes out of the forest as inevitably as the natural bear and the wildcat stick there. To seek to be natural implies a consciousness that forbids all naturalness forever. It is as easy—and no easier—to be natural in a *salon* as in a swamp, if one do not aim at it, for what we call unnaturalness always has its spring in a man's thinking too much about himself. "It is impossible," said Turgot¹⁵⁷ "for a vulgar man to be simple."

I look upon a great deal of the modern sentimentalism about Nature as a mark of disease. It is one more symptom of the general liver-complaint. In a man of wholesome constitution the wilderness is well enough for a mood or a vacation, but not for a habit of life. Those who have most loudly advertised their passion for seclusion and their intimacy with nature, from Petrarch down, have been mostly sentimentalists, unreal men, misanthropes on the spindle side, solacing an uneasy suspicion of themselves by professing contempt for their kind. They make demands on the world in advance proportioned to their ⁴⁰ inward measure of their own merit, and are angry that the world pays only by the visible measure of

¹⁵² "One still touches his time and powerfully, even when he resists it."

¹⁵³ In the middle ages Simon Stylites lived for many years on a pillar sixty feet high.

¹⁵⁴ Rousseau lived in a cottage named "The Hermitage," on the estate of Mme. Epinay, called La Chevrete.

¹⁵⁵ Muskrats.

¹⁵⁶ German expression for a very small own, or "little corner."

¹⁵⁷ Anne Robert Jacques, Baron de l'Aulne (1727-81), French statesman and author.

performance. It is true of Rousseau, the modern founder of the sect, true of St Pierre,¹⁵⁸ his intellectual child, and of Chateaubriand,¹⁵⁹ his grandchild, the inventor of what we may call the primitive forest cure and who first was touched by the solemn falling of a tree from natural decay in the windless silence of the woods. It is a very shallow view that affirms trees and rocks to be healthy, and cannot see that men in communities are just as true to the laws of their organization and destiny, that can tolerate the puffin and the fox, but not the fool and the knave, that would shun politics because of its demagogues, and snuff up the stench of the obscene fungus. The divine life of Nature is more wonderful, more various, more sublime in man than in any other of her works, and the wisdom that is gained by commerce with men, as Montaigne and Shakespeare gained it, or with one's own soul among men, as Dante, is the most delightful, as it is the most precious, of all. In outward nature it is still man that interests us, and we care far less for the things seen than the way in which they are seen by poetic eyes like Wordsworth's or Thoreau's, and the reflections they cast there. To hear the to-do that is often made over the simple fact that a man sees the image of himself in the outward world, one is reminded of a savage when he for the first time catches a glimpse of himself in a looking-glass. "Venerable child of Nature," we are tempted to say, "to whose science in the invention of the tobacco-pipe, to whose art in the tattooing of thine undegenerate hide not yet enslaved by tailors, we are slowly striving to climb back, the miracle thou beholdest is sold in my unhappy country for a shilling!" If matters go on as they have done, and everybody must needs blab of all the favors that have been done him by roadside and river-brink and woodland walk, as if to kiss and tell were no longer treachery, it will be a positive refreshment to meet a man who is as superbly indifferent to Nature as she is to him. By and by we shall have John Smith, of No. — 12, — 12th Street, advertising that he is not the J. S. who saw a cow-lily on Thursday last, as he never saw one in his life, would not see one if he could, and is prepared to prove an alibi on the day in question.

Solitary communion with Nature does not seem

¹⁵⁸ Probably Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737-1814), precursor of French romantic movement

¹⁵⁹ René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848), author of *Atala* and *René*, early romantic works.

to have been sanitary or sweetening in its influence on Thoreau's character. On the contrary, his letters show him more cynical as he grew older. While he studied with respectful attention the minks and woodchucks, his neighbors, he looked with utter contempt on the august drama of destiny of which his country was the scene, and on which the curtain had already risen. He was converting us back to a state of nature "so eloquently," as Voltaire said of Rousseau, "that he almost persuaded us to go on all fours," while the wiser fates were making it possible for us to walk erect for the first time. Had he conversed more with his fellows, his sympathies would have widened with the assurance that his peculiar genius had more appreciation, and his writings a larger circle of readers, or at least a warmer one, than he dreamed of. We have the highest testimony * to the natural sweetness, sincerity, and nobleness of his temper, and in his books an equally irrefragable one to the rare quality of his mind. He was not a strong thinker, but a sensitive feeler. Yet his mind strikes us as cold and wintry in its purity. A light snow has fallen everywhere where he seems to come on the track of the shier sensations that would elsewhere leave no trace. I think greater compression would have done more for his fame. A feeling of sameness comes over us as we read so much. Trifles are recorded with an over-minute punctuality and conscientiousness of detail. He registers the state of his personal thermometer thirteen times a day. I cannot help thinking sometimes of the man who

watches, starves, freezes, and sweats
To learn but catechisms and alphabets
Of unconcerning things, matters of fact,

and sometimes of the saying of the Persian poet, that "when the owl would boast, he boasts of catching mice at the edge of a hole." We could readily part with some of his affectations. It was well enough for Pythagoras¹⁶⁰ to say, once for all, "When I was Euphorbus at the siege of Troy"; not so well for Thoreau to travesty it into "When I was a shepherd on the plains of Assyria." A naive thing said over again is anything but naive. But with every exception, there is no writing comparable with Thoreau's in kind, that is comparable with it in degree where it is

* Mr Emerson, in the Biographical Sketch prefixed to the *Excursions*

¹⁶⁰ See note 145.

best; where it disengages itself, that is, from the tangled roots and dead leaves of a second-hand Orientalism, and runs limpid and smooth and broadening as it runs, a mirror for whatever is grand and lovely in both worlds.

George Sand ¹⁶¹ says neatly, that "Art is not a study of positive reality," (*actuality* were the fitter word,) "but a seeking after ideal truth." It would be doing very inadequate justice to Thoreau if we left it to be inferred that this ideal element did not exist in him, ¹⁰ and that too in larger proportion, if less obtrusive, than his nature-worship. He took nature as the mountain-path to an ideal world. If the path wind a good deal, if he record too faithfully every trip over a root, if he botanize somewhat wearisomely, he gives us now and then superb outlooks from some jutting crag, and brings us out at last into an illimitable ether, where the breathing is not difficult for those who have any true touch of the climbing spirit. His shanty-life was a mere impossibility, so far as his own ²⁰ conception of it goes, as an entire independency of mankind. The tub of Diogenes ¹⁶² had a sounder bottom. Thoreau's experiment actually presupposed all that complicated civilization which it theoretically abjured. He squatted on another man's land; he borrows an axe; his boards, his nails, his bricks, his mortar, his books, his lamp, his fishhooks, his plow, his hoe, all turn state's evidence against him as an accomplice in the sin of that artificial civilization which rendered it possible that such a person as ³⁰ Henry D. Thoreau should exist at all. *Magnis tamen*

excidit ausis. ¹⁶³ His aim was a noble and a useful one, in the direction of "plain living and high thinking." ¹⁶⁴ It was a practical sermon on Emerson's text that "things are in the saddle and ride mankind," ¹⁶⁵ an attempt to solve Carlyle's problem of "lessening your denominator." His whole life was a rebuke of the waste and aimlessness of our American luxury, which is an abject enslavement to tawdry upholstery. He had "fine translunary things" ¹⁶⁶ in him. His better style as a writer is in keeping with the simplicity and purity of his life. We have said that his range was narrow, but to be a master is to be a master. He had caught his English at its living source, among the poets and prose-writers of its best days; his literature was extensive and recondite; his quotations are always nuggets of the purest ore; there are sentences of his as perfect as anything in the language, and thoughts as clearly crystallized; his metaphors and images are always fresh from the soil; he had watched Nature like a detective who is to go upon the stand; as we read him, it seems as if all-out-of-doors had kept a diary and become its own Montaigne; ¹⁶⁷ we look at the landscape as in a Claude Lorrain ¹⁶⁸ glass; compared with his, all other books of similar aim, even White's *Selborne*, ¹⁶⁹ seem dry as a country clergyman's meteorological journal in an old almanac. He belongs with Donne and Browne and Novalis, ¹⁷⁰ if not with the originally creative men, with the scarcely smaller class who are peculiar, and whose leaves shed their invisible thought-seed like ferns.

1865

Democracy

INAUGURAL ADDRESS ON ASSUMING THE PRESIDENCY OF THE BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLAND INSTITUTE,
BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND, 6 OCTOBER, 1884 ¹⁷¹

He must be a born leader or misleader of men, or must have been sent into the world unfurnished with that modulating and restraining balance-wheel which we call a sense of humor, who, in old age, has as

strong a confidence in his opinions and in the necessity of bringing the universe into conformity with them as he had in youth. In a world the very condition of whose being is that it should be in perpetual flux, where all seems mirage, and the one abiding

¹⁶¹ Pen name of the Barronne Dudevant, born Amantine Lucile-Aurore Dupin (1804-76), French novelist.

¹⁶² Greek Cynic philosopher (c. 412-323 B.C.), reputed to have lived in a tub in order to simplify life.

¹⁶³ Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, II, 328: "He failed, nevertheless, in great attempts."

¹⁶⁴ Wordsworth, "Written in London."

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Emerson's "Ode Inscribed to W. E. Channing."

¹⁶⁶ Michael Drayton, "To Henry Reynolds, of Poets and Poesy," l. 106.

¹⁶⁷ Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1533-92), French essayist.

¹⁶⁸ Claude Lorrain (1600-82), French landscape painter.

¹⁶⁹ Gilbert White (1720-93), wrote *Natural History . . . of Selborne* (1789).

¹⁷⁰ John Donne (1573-1631), English poet; Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82), English physician and mystical author; Novalis, pseudonym for Baron Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772-1801), German romantic poet.

¹⁷¹ Published in *Democracy and Other Addresses* (1886).

thing is the effort to distinguish realities from appearances, the elderly man must be indeed of a singularly tough and valid fibre who is certain that he has any clarified residuum of experience, any assured verdict of reflection, that deserves to be called an opinion, or who, even if he had, feels that he is justified in holding mankind by the button while he is expounding it. And in a world of daily—nay, almost hourly—journalism, where every clever man, every man who thinks himself clever, or whom anybody else thinks 10 clever, is called upon to deliver his judgment point-blank and at the word of command on every conceivable subject of human thought, or, on what sometimes seems to him very much the same thing, on every inconceivable display of human want of thought, there is such a spendthrift waste of all those commonplaces which furnish the permitted staple of public discourse that there is little chance of beguiling a new tune out of the one-stringed instrument on which we have been thrumming so long. 20 In this desperate necessity one is often tempted to think that, if all the words of the dictionary were tumbled down in a heap and then all those fortuitous juxtapositions and combinations that made tolerable sense were picked out and pieced together, we might find among them some poignant suggestions towards novelty of thought or expression. But, alas! it is only the great poets who seem to have this unsolicited profusion of unexpected and incalculable phrase, this infinite variety of topic. For everybody else everything 30 has been said before, and said over again after. He who has read his Aristotle will be apt to think that observation has on most points of general applicability said its last word, and he who has mounted the tower of Plato to look abroad from it will never hope to climb another with so lofty a vantage of speculation. Where it is so simple if not so easy a thing to hold one's peace, why add to the general confusion of tongues? There is something dishcartening, too, in being expected to fill up not less than a certain measure of time, as if the mind were an hour-glass, that need only be shaken and set on one end or the other, as the case may be, to run its allotted sixty minutes with decorous exactitude. I recollect being once told by the late eminent naturalist Agassiz¹⁷² that when he was to deliver his first lecture as professor (at Zürich, I believe) he had grave doubts of his ability

to occupy the prescribed three quarters of an hour. He was speaking without notes, and glancing anxiously from time to time at the watch that lay before him on the desk. "When I had spoken a half hour," he said, "I had told them everything I knew in the world, everything! Then I began to repeat myself," he added, roguishly, "and I have done nothing else ever since." Beneath the humorous exaggeration of the story I seemed to see the face of a very serious and improving moral. And yet if one were to say only what he had to say and then stopped, his audience would feel defrauded of their honest measure. Let us take courage by the example of the French, whose exportation of Bordeaux wines increases as the area of their land in vineyards is diminished.

To me, somewhat hopelessly revolving these things, the undelayable year has rolled round, and I find myself called upon to say something in this place, where so many wiser men have spoken before me. Precluded in my quality of national guest, by motives of taste and discretion, from dealing with any question of immediate and domestic concern, it seemed to me wisest, or at any rate most prudent, to choose a topic of comparatively abstract interest, and to ask your indulgence for a few somewhat generalized remarks on a matter concerning which I had some experimental knowledge, derived from the use of such eyes and ears as Nature had been pleased to endow me withal, and such report as I had been able to win from them. The subject which most readily suggested itself was the spirit and the working of those conceptions of life and polity which are lumped together whether for reproach or commendation under the name of Democracy. By temperament and education of a conservative turn, I saw the last years of that quaint Arcadia which French travellers saw with delighted amazement a century ago, and have watched the change (to me a sad one) from an agricultural to a proletary population. The testimony of Balaam should carry some conviction. I have grown to manhood and am now growing old with the growth of this system of government in my native land, have watched its advances, or what some would call its encroachments, gradual and irresistible as those of a glacier, have been an ear-witness to the forebodings of wise and good and timid men, and have lived to see those forebodings belied by the course of events, which is apt to show itself humorously careless of the reputation of prophets. I recollect hearing a sagacious

¹⁷² Louis Agassiz (1807-73), Swiss-born naturalist and professor at Harvard. Lowell wrote an ode to him.

old gentleman say in 1840 that the doing away with the property qualification for suffrage twenty years before had been the ruin of the State of Massachusetts; that it had put public credit and private estate alike at the mercy of demagogues. I lived to see that Commonwealth twenty odd years later paying the interest on her bonds in gold, though it cost her sometimes nearly three for one to keep her faith, and that while suffering an unparalleled drain of men and treasure in helping to sustain the unity and self-respect of the nation.

If universal suffrage has worked ill in our larger cities, as it certainly has, this has been mainly because the hands that wielded it were untrained to its use. There the election of a majority of the trustees of the public money is controlled by the most ignorant and vicious of a population which has come to us from abroad, wholly unpractised in self-government and incapable of assimilation by American habits and methods. But the finances of our towns, where the native tradition is still dominant and whose affairs are discussed and settled in a public assembly of the people, have been in general honestly and prudently administered. Even in manufacturing towns, where a majority of the voters live by their daily wages, it is not so often the recklessness as the moderation of public expenditure that surprises an old-fashioned observer. "The beggar is in the saddle at last," cries Proverbial Wisdom. "Why, in the name of all former experience, does n't he ride to the Devil?" Because in the very act of mounting he ceased to be a beggar and became part owner of the piece of property he bestrides. The last thing we need be anxious about is property. It always has friends or the means of making them. If riches have wings to fly away from their owner, they have wings also to escape danger.

I hear America sometimes playfully accused of sending you all your storms, and am in the habit of parrying the charge by alleging that we are enabled to do this because, in virtue of our protective system, we can afford to make better bad weather than anybody else. And what wiser use could we make of it than to export it in return for the paupers which some European countries are good enough to send over to us who have not attained to the same skill in the manufacture of them? But bad weather is not the worst thing that is laid at our door. A French gentleman, not long ago, forgetting Burke's monition of how unwise it is to draw an indictment against a whole

people,¹⁷³ has charged us with the responsibility of whatever he finds disagreeable in the morals or manners of his countrymen. If M. Zola¹⁷⁴ or some other competent witness would only go into the box and tell us what those morals and manners were before our example corrupted them! But I confess that I find little to interest and less to edify me in these international bandyings of "You 're another."

I shall address myself to a single point only in the long list of offences of which we are more or less gravely accused, because that really includes all the rest. It is that we are infecting the Old World with what seems to be thought the entirely new disease of Democracy. It is generally people who are in what are called easy circumstances who can afford the leisure to treat themselves to a handsome complaint, and these experience an immediate alleviation when once they have found a sonorous Greek name to abuse it by. There is something consolatory also, something flattering to their sense of personal dignity, and to that conceit of singularity which is the natural recoil from our uneasy consciousness of being commonplace, in thinking ourselves victims of a malady by which no one had ever suffered before. Accordingly they find it simpler to class under one comprehensive heading whatever they find offensive to their nerves, their tastes, their interests, or what they suppose to be their opinions, and christen it Democracy, much as physicians label every obscure disease gout, or as cross-grained fellows lay their ill-temper to the weather. But is it really a new ailment, and, if it be, is America answerable for it? Even if she were, would it account for the phylloxera, and hoof-and-mouth disease, and bad harvests, and bad English, and the German bands, and the Boers, and all the other discomforts with which these later days have vexed the souls of them that go in chariots? Yet I have seen the evil example of Democracy in America cited as the source and origin of things quite as heterogeneous and quite as little connected with it by any sequence of cause and effect. Surely this ferment is nothing new. It has been at work for centuries, and we are more conscious of it only because in this age of publicity, where the newspapers offer a rostrum to whoever has a grievance, or fancies that he has, the bubbles and scum thrown up by it are more noticeable

¹⁷³ In *Speech on Conciliation with America*.

¹⁷⁴ Emile Zola, the French naturalistic novelist, published *Germinal* (1885).

on the surface than in those dumb ages when there was a cover of silence and suppression on the cauldron Bernardo Navagero, speaking of the Provinces of Lower Austria in 1546, tells us that "in them there are five sorts of persons, Clergy, Barons, Nobles, Burghers, and Peasants Of these last no account is made, *because they have no voice in the Diet*" *

Nor was it among the people that subversive or mistaken doctrines had their rise A Father of the Church said that property was theft many centuries before Proudhon ¹⁷⁵ was born Bourdaloue ¹⁷⁶ reaffirmed it Montesquieu ¹⁷⁷ was the inventor of national workshops, and of the theory that the State owed every man a living Nay, was not the Church herself the first organized Democracy? A few centuries ago the chief end of man was to keep his soul alive, and then the little kernel of heaven that sets the gases at work was religious, and produced the Reformation. Even in that, far-sighted persons like the Emperor Charles V ¹⁷⁸ saw the germ of political and social revolution Now that the chief end of man seems to have become the keeping of the body alive, and as comfortably alive as possible, the heaven also has become wholly political and social But there had also been social upheavals before the Reformation and contemporaneously with it, especially among men of Teutonic race. The Reformation gave outlet and direction to an unrest already existing. Formerly the immense majority of men—our brothers—knew only their sufferings, their wants, and their desires. They are beginning now to know their opportunity and their power. All persons who see deeper than

* Below the peasants, it should be remembered, was still another even more helpless class, the servile farm-laborers. The same witness informs us that of the extraordinary imposts the Peasants paid nearly twice as much in proportion to their estimated property as the Barons, Nobles, and Burghers together Moreover, the upper classes were assessed at their own valuation, while they arbitrarily fixed that of the Peasants who had no voice (*Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti*, Sene I., tomo I, pp 378, 379, 389)

¹⁷⁵ Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-65), French journalist and Socialist

¹⁷⁶ Louis Bourdaloue (1632-1704), Jesuit theologian and orator

¹⁷⁷ Charles de Secondat Montesquieu (1689-1755), French lawyer, author, and political philosopher His *L'Esprit des Lois* (1748) profoundly influenced political thought in Europe and America

¹⁷⁸ Emperor of Holy Roman Empire, grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella, King of Spain in 1516 and Emperor in 1519 During his reign, Spain conquered Peru and Mexico.

their plates are rather inclined to thank God for it than to bewail it, for the sores of Lazarus have a poison in them against which Dives has no antidote ¹⁷⁹

There can be no doubt that the spectacle of a great and prosperous Democracy on the other side of the Atlantic must react powerfully on the aspirations and political theories of men in the Old World who do not find things to their mind, but, whether for good or evil, it should not be overlooked that the acorn from which it sprang was ripened on the British oak Every successive swarm that has gone out from this *officio gentium* ¹⁸⁰ has, when left to its own instincts—may I not call them hereditary instincts?—assumed a more or less thoroughly democratic form. This would seem to show, what I believe to be the fact, that the British Constitution, under whatever disguises of prudence or decorum, is essentially democratic England, indeed, may be called a monarchy with democratic tendencies, the United States a democracy with conservative instincts People are continually saying that America is in the air, and I am glad to think it is, since this means only that a clearer conception of human claims and human duties is beginning to be prevalent The discontent with the existing order of things, however, pervaded the atmosphere wherever the conditions were favorable, long before Columbus, seeking the back door of Asia, found himself knocking at the front door of America. I say wherever the conditions were favorable, for it is certain that the germs of disease do not stick or find a prosperous field for their development and noxious activity unless where the simplest sanitary precautions have been neglected. "For this effect defective comes by cause," ¹⁸¹ as Polonius said long ago. It is only by instigation of the wrongs of men that what are called the Rights of Man become turbulent and dangerous. It is then only that they syllogize unwelcome truths It is not the insurrections of ignorance that are dangerous, but the revolts of intelligence:—

The wicked and the weak rebel in vain,
Slaves by their own compulsion ¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Cf Luke xvi 19-31

¹⁸⁰ Birthplace (or laboratory) of the race.

¹⁸¹ *Hamlet* II, ii, 103

¹⁸² Should be

"The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,
Slaves by their own compulsion"
Coleridge, "France An Ode"

Had the governing classes in France during the last century paid as much heed to their proper business as to their pleasures or manners, the guillotine need never have severed that spinal marrow of orderly and secular tradition through which in a normally constituted state the brain sympathizes with the extremities and sends will and impulsion thither. It is only when the reasonable and practicable are denied that men demand the unreasonable and impracticable; only when the possible is made difficult that they fancy 10 the impossible to be easy. Fairy tales are made out of the dreams of the poor. No; the sentiment which lies at the root of democracy is nothing new. I am speaking always of a sentiment, a spirit, and not of a form of government; for this was but the outgrowth of the other and not its cause. This sentiment is merely an expression of the natural wish of people to have a hand, if need be a controlling hand, in the management of their own affairs. What is new is that they are more and more gaining that control, and learning 20 more and more how to be worthy of it. What we used to call the tendency or drift—what we are being taught to call more wisely the evolution of things—has for some time been setting steadily in this direction. There is no good in arguing with the inevitable. The only argument available with an east wind is to put on your overcoat. And in this case, also, the prudent will prepare themselves to encounter what they cannot prevent. Some people advise us to put on the brakes, as if the movement of which we are conscious 30 were that of a railway train running down an incline. But a metaphor is no argument, though it be sometimes the gunpowder to drive one home and imbed it in the memory. Our disquiet comes of what nurses and other experienced persons call growing-pains, and need not seriously alarm us. They are what every generation before us—certainly every generation since the invention of printing—has gone through with more or less good fortune. To the door of every generation there comes a knocking, and unless the house- 40 hold, like the Thane of Cawdor and his wife,¹⁸³ have been doing some deed without a name, they need not shudder. It turns out at worst to be a poor relation who wishes to come in out of the cold. The porter always grumbles and is slow to open—"Who's there, in the name of Beelzebub?"¹⁸⁴ he mutters. Not a change for the better in our human housekeeping has

ever taken place that wise and good men have not opposed it,—have not prophesied with the alderman that the world would wake up to find its throat cut in consequence of it. The world, on the contrary, wakes up, rubs its eyes, yawns, stretches itself, and goes about its business as if nothing had happened. Suppression of the slave trade, abolition of slavery, trade unions,—at all of these excellent people shook their heads despondingly, and murmured "Ichabod."¹⁸⁵ But the trade unions are now debating instead of conspiring, and we all read their discussions with comfort and hope, sure that they are learning the business of citizenship and the difficulties of practical legislation.

One of the most curious of these frenzies of exclusion was that against the emancipation of the Jews. All share in the government of the world was denied for centuries to perhaps the ablest, certainly the most tenacious, race that had ever lived in it—the race to whom we owed our religion and the purest spiritual stimulus and consolation to be found in all literature—a race in which ability seems as natural and hereditary as the curve of their noses, and whose blood, furtively mingling with the bluest bloods in Europe, has quickened them with its own indomitable impulsion. We drove them into a corner, but they had their revenge, as the wronged are always sure to have it sooner or later. They made their corner the counter and banking-house of the world, and thence they rule it and us with the ignobler sceptre of finance. Your grandfathers mobbed Priestley¹⁸⁶ only that you might set up his statue and make Birmingham the headquarters of English Unitarianism. We hear it said sometimes that this is an age of transition, as if that made matters clearer; but can any one point us to an age that was not? If he could, he would show us an age of stagnation. The question for us, as it has been for all before us, is to make the transition gradual and easy, to see that our points are right so that the train may not come to grief. For we should remember that nothing is more natural for people whose education has been neglected than to spell evolution with an initial "r." A great man struggling with the storms of fate has been called a sublime

¹⁸⁵ Hebraic word meaning "no glory," for a child whose mother died in giving him birth—see I Samuel iv:21. The term was applied to Daniel Webster after his "compromise" speech; see Whittier's poem, "Ichabod."

¹⁸⁶ Joseph Priestley (1733–1804), English clergyman and chemist, whose house was burned in 1791 in Birmingham because of his sympathy with the French Revolution. He emigrated to the United States in 1794.

¹⁸³ Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

¹⁸⁴ *Macbeth* II, iii.

spectacle, but surely a great man wrestling with these new forces that have come into the world, mastering them and controlling them to beneficent ends, would be a yet sublimer. Here is not a danger, and if there were it would be only a better school of manhood, a nobler scope for ambition. I have hinted that what people are afraid of in democracy is less the thing itself than what they conceive to be its necessary adjuncts and consequences. It is supposed to reduce all mankind to a dead level of mediocrity in character and culture, to vulgarize men's conceptions of life, and therefore their code of morals, manners, and conduct—to endanger the rights of property and possession. But I believe that the real gravamen of the charge lies in the habit it has of making itself generally disagreeable by asking the Powers that Be at the most inconvenient moment whether they are the powers that ought to be. If the powers that be are in a condition to give a satisfactory answer to this inevitable question, they need feel in no way discomforted by it.

Few people take the trouble of trying to find out what democracy really is. Yet this would be a great help, for it is our lawless and uncertain thoughts, it is the indefiniteness of our impressions, that fill darkness, whether mental or physical, with spectres and hobgoblins. Democracy is nothing more than an experiment in government, more likely to succeed in a new soil, but likely to be tried in all soils, which must stand or fall on its own merits as others have done before it. For there is no trick of perpetual motion in politics any more than in mechanics. President Lincoln defined democracy to be "the government of the people by the people for the people."¹⁸⁷ This is a sufficiently compact statement of it as a political arrangement. Theodore Parker¹⁸⁸ said that "Democracy meant not 'I'm as good as you are,' but 'You're as good as I am.'" And this is the ethical conception of it, necessary as a complement of the other; a conception which, could it be made actual and practical, would easily solve all the riddles that the old sphinx of political and social economy who sits by the roadside has been proposing to mankind from the beginning, and which mankind have shown such a singular talent for answering wrongly. In this sense Christ was the first true democrat that ever

breathed, as the old dramatist Dekker said he was the first true gentleman.¹⁸⁹ The characters may be easily doubled, so strong is the likeness between them. A beautiful and profound parable of the Persian poet Jellaladeen¹⁹⁰ tells us that "One knocked at the Beloved's door, and a voice asked from within 'Who is there?' and he answered 'It is I.' Then the voice said, 'This house will not hold me and thee,' and the door was not opened. Then went the lover into the desert and fasted and prayed in solitude, and after a year he returned and knocked again at the door, and again the voice asked 'Who is there?' and he said 'It is thyself,' and the door was opened to him." But that is idealism, you will say, and this is an only too practical world. I grant it, but I am one of those who believe that the real will never find an irremovable basis till it rests on the ideal. It used to be thought that a democracy was possible only in a small territory, and this is doubtless true of a democracy strictly defined, for in such all the citizens decide directly upon every question of public concern in a general assembly. An example still survives in the tiny Swiss canton of Appenzell. But this immediate intervention of the people in their own affairs is not of the essence of democracy; it is not necessary, nor indeed, in most cases, practicable. Democracies to which Mr. Lincoln's definition would fairly enough apply have existed, and now exist, in which, though the supreme authority reside in the people, yet they can act only indirectly on the national policy. This generation has seen a democracy with an imperial figurehead, and in all that have ever existed the body politic has never embraced all the inhabitants included within its territory, the right to share in the direction of affairs has been confined to citizens, and citizenship has been further restricted by various limitations, sometimes of property, sometimes of nativity, and always of age and sex.

The framers of the American Constitution were far from wishing or intending to found a democracy in the strict sense of the word, though, as was inevitable, every expansion of the scheme of government they elaborated has been in a democratical direction. But this has been generally the slow result of growth, and not the sudden innovation of theory; in fact, they had a profound disbelief in theory, and knew better than to commit the folly of breaking

¹⁸⁷ Conclusion of the Gettysburg Address.

¹⁸⁸ Unitarian minister and abolitionist, too radical for the liberal Unitarian Church.

¹⁸⁹ Thomas Dekker, *The Honest Whore*, end of Pt. I.

¹⁹⁰ Jalal-uddin Rumi (1207-72), author of moral apologies.

with the past. They were not seduced by the French fallacy that a new system of government could be ordered like a new suit of clothes. They would as soon have thought of ordering a new suit of flesh and skin. It is only on the roaring loom of time that the stuff is woven for such a vesture of their thought and experience as they were meditating. They recognized fully the value of tradition and habit as the great allies of permanence and stability. They all had that distaste for innovation which belonged to their race, 10 and many of them a distrust of human nature derived from their creed. The day of sentiment was over, and no dithyrambic affirmations or fine-drawn analyses of the Rights of Man would serve their present turn. This was a practical question, and they addressed themselves to it as men of knowledge and judgment should. Their problem was how to adapt English principles and precedents to the new conditions of American life, and they solved it with singular discretion. They put as many obstacles as they could con- 20 trive, not in the way of the people's will, but of their whim. With few exceptions they probably admitted the logic of the then accepted syllogism,—democracy, anarchy, despotism. But this formula was framed upon the experience of small cities shut up to stew within their narrow walls, where the number of citizens made but an inconsiderable fraction of the inhabitants, where every passion was reverberated from house to house and from man to man with gathering rumor till every impulse became gregarious 30 and therefore inconsiderate, and every popular assembly needed but an infusion of eloquent sophistry to turn it into a mob, all the more dangerous because sanctified with the formality of law.*

Fortunately their case was wholly different. They were to legislate for a widely-scattered population and for States already practised in the discipline of a partial independence. They had an unequalled opportunity and enormous advantages. The material they had to work upon was already democratical by in- 40 stinct and habitude. It was tempered to their hands by more than a century's schooling in self-government. They had but to give permanent and conservative form to a ductile mass. In giving impulse and direction to their new institutions, especially in sup-

plying them with checks and balances, they had a great help and safeguard in their federal organization. The different, sometimes conflicting, interests and social systems of the several States made existence as a Union and coalescence into a nation conditional on a constant practice of moderation and compromise. The very elements of disintegration were the best guides in political training. Their children learned the lesson of compromise only too well, and it was the application of it to a question of fundamental morals that cost us our civil war. We learned once for all that compromise makes a good umbrella but a poor roof; that it is a temporary expedient, often wise in party politics, almost sure to be unwise in statesmanship.

Has not the trial of democracy in America proved, on the whole, successful? If it had not, would the Old World be vexed with any fears of its proving contagious? This trial would have been less severe could it have been made with a people homogeneous in race, language, and traditions, whereas the United States have been called on to absorb and assimilate enormous masses of foreign population, heterogeneous in all these respects, and drawn mainly from that class which might fairly say that the world was not their friend, nor the world's law. The previous condition too often justified the traditional Irishman, who, landing in New York and asked what his politics were, inquired if there was a Government there, and on being told that there was, retorted, "Thin I 'm agin it!" We have taken from Europe the poorest, the most ignorant, the most turbulent of her people, and have made them over into good citizens, who have added to our wealth, and who are ready to die in defence of a country and of institutions which they know to be worth dying for. The exceptions have been (and they are lamentable exceptions) where these hordes of ignorance and poverty have coagulated in great cities. But the social system is yet 40 to seek which has not to look the same terrible wolf in the eyes. On the other hand, at this very moment Irish peasants are buying up the worn-out farms of Massachusetts, and making them productive again by the same virtues of industry and thrift that once made them profitable to the English ancestors of the men who are deserting them. To have achieved even these prosaic results (if you choose to call them so), and that out of materials the most discordant,—I might say the most recalcitrant,—argues a certain

* The effect of the electric telegraph in reproducing this trooping of emotion and perhaps of opinion is yet to be measured. The effect of Darwinism as a disintegrator of humanitarianism is also to be reckoned with.

beneficent virtue in the system that could do it, and is not to be accounted for by mere luck Carlyle said¹⁹¹ scornfully that America meant only roast turkey every day for everybody He forgot that States, as Bacon said of wars, go on their bellies As for the security of property, it should be tolerably well secured in a country where every other man hopes to be rich, even though the only property qualification be the ownership of two hands that add to the general wealth Is it not the best security for anything to interest the largest possible number of persons in its preservation and the smallest in its division? In point of fact, far-seeing men count the increasing power of wealth and its combinations as one of the chief dangers with which the institutions of the United States are threatened in the not distant future The right of individual property is no doubt the very corner-stone of civilization as hitherto understood, but I am a little impatient of being told that property is entitled to exceptional consideration because it bears all the burdens of the State. It bears those, indeed, which can most easily be borne, but poverty pays with its person the chief expenses of war, pestilence, and famine Wealth should not forget this, for poverty is beginning to think of it now and then. Let me not be misunderstood I see as clearly as any man possibly can, and rate as highly, the value of wealth, and of hereditary wealth, as the security of refinement, the feeder of all those arts that ennoble and beautify life, and as making a country worth living in Many an ancestral hall here in England has been a nursery of that culture which has been of example and benefit to all. Old gold has a civilizing virtue which new gold must grow old to be capable of secreting.

I should not think of coming before you to defend or to criticise any form of government. All have their virtues, all their defects, and all have illustrated one period or another in the history of the race, with signal services to humanity and culture There is not one that could stand a cynical cross-examination by an experienced criminal lawyer, except that of a perfectly wise and perfectly good despot, such as the world has never seen, except in that white-haired king of Browning's, who

Lived long ago
In the morning of the world,
When Earth was nearer Heaven than now¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ In *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, No. 1 (1850).

¹⁹² *Pippa Passes*, third song.

The English race, if they did not invent government by discussion, have at least carried it nearest to perfection in practice It seems a very safe and reasonable contrivance for occupying the attention of the country, and is certainly a better way of settling questions than by push of pike Yet, if one should ask it why it should not rather be called government by gabble, it would have to fumble in its pocket a good while before it found the change for a convincing reply As matters stand, too, it is beginning to be doubtful whether Parliament and Congress sit at Westminster and Washington or in the editors' rooms of the leading journals, so thoroughly is everything debated before the authorized and responsible debaters get on their legs And what shall we say of government by a majority of voices? To a person who in the last century would have called himself an Impartial Observer, a numerical preponderance seems, on the whole, as clumsy a way of arriving at truth as could well be devised, but experience has apparently shown it to be a convenient arrangement for determining what may be expedient or advisable or practicable at any given moment Truth, after all, wears a different face to everybody, and it would be too tedious to wait till all were agreed She is said to lie at the bottom of a well, for the very reason, perhaps, that whoever looks down in search of her sees his own image at the bottom, and is persuaded not only that he has seen the goddess, but that she is far better-looking than he had imagined

The arguments against universal suffrage are equally unanswerable. "What," we exclaim, "shall Tom, Dick, and Harry have as much weight in the scale as I?" Of course, nothing could be more absurd. And yet universal suffrage has not been the instrument of greater unwisdom than contrivances of a more select description Assemblies could be mentioned composed entirely of Masters of Arts and Doctors in Divinity which have sometimes shown traces of human passion or prejudice in their votes Have the Serene Highnesses and Enlightened Classes carried on the business of Mankind so well, then, that there is no use in trying a less costly method? The democratic theory is that those Constitutions are likely to prove steadiest which have the broadest base, that the right to vote makes a safety-valve of every voter, and that the best way of teaching a man how to vote is to give him the chance of practice For the question is no longer the academic one, "Is

it wise to give every man the ballot?" but rather the practical one, "Is it prudent to deprive whole classes of it any longer?" It may be conjectured that it is cheaper in the long run to lift men up than to hold them down, and that the ballot in their hands is less dangerous to society than a sense of wrong in their heads. At any rate this is the dilemma to which the drift of opinion has been for some time sweeping us, and in politics a dilemma is a more unmanageable thing to hold by the horns than a wolf by the ears. 10 It is said that the right of suffrage is not valued when it is indiscriminately bestowed, and there may be some truth in this, for I have observed that what men prize most is a privilege, even if it be that of chief mourner at a funeral. But is there not danger that it will be valued at more than its worth if denied, and that some illegitimate way will be sought to make up for the want of it? Men who have a voice in public affairs are at once affiliated with one or other of the great parties between which society is 20 divided, merge their individual hopes and opinions in its safer, because more generalized, hopes and opinions, are disciplined by its tactics, and acquire, to a certain degree, the orderly qualities of an army. They no longer belong to a class, but to a body corporate. Of one thing, at least, we may be certain, that, under whatever method of helping things to go wrong man's wit can contrive, those who have the divine right to govern will be found to govern in the end, and that the highest privilege to which the 30 majority of mankind can aspire is that of being governed by those wiser than they. Universal suffrage has in the United States sometimes been made the instrument of inconsiderate changes, under the notion of reform, and this from a misconception of the true meaning of popular government. One of these has been the substitution in many of the States of popular election for official selection in the choice of judges. The same system applied to military officers was the source of much evil during our civil war, 40 and, I believe, had to be abandoned. But it has been also true that on all great questions of national policy a reserve of prudence and discretion has been brought out at the critical moment to turn the scale in favor of a wiser decision. An appeal to the reason of the people has never been known to fail in the long run. It is, perhaps, true that, by effacing the principle of passive obedience, democracy, ill understood, has slackened the spring of that ductility to

discipline which is essential to "the unity and married calm of States." But I feel assured that experience and necessity will cure this evil, as they have shown their power to cure others. And under what frame of policy have evils ever been remedied till they became intolerable, and shook men out of their indolent indifference through their fears?

We are told that the inevitable result of democracy is to sap the foundations of personal independence, to weaken the principle of authority, to lessen the respect due to eminence, whether in station, virtue, or genius. If these things were so, society could not hold together. Perhaps the best forcing-house of robust individuality would be where public opinion is inclined to be most overbearing, as he must be of heroic temper who should walk along Piccadilly ¹⁹³ at the height of the Season in a soft hat. As for authority, it is one of the symptoms of the time that the religious reverence for it is declining everywhere, but this is due partly to the fact that statecraft is no longer looked upon as a mystery, but as a business, and partly to the decay of superstition, by which I mean the habit of respecting what we are told to respect rather than what is respectable in itself. There is more rough and tumble in the American democracy than is altogether agreeable to people of sensitive nerves and refined habits, and the people take their political duties lightly and laughingly, as is, perhaps, neither unnatural nor unbecoming in a young giant. Democracies can no more jump away from their own shadows than the rest of us can. They no doubt sometimes make mistakes and pay honor to men who do not deserve it. But they do this because they believe them worthy of it, and though it be true that the idol is the measure of the worshipper, yet the worship has in it the germ of a nobler religion. But is it democracies alone that fall into these errors? I, who have seen it proposed to erect a statue to Hudson, ¹⁹⁴ the railway king, and have heard Louis Napoleon ¹⁹⁵ hailed as the saviour of society by men who certainly had no democratic associations or leanings, am not ready to think so. But democracies have likewise their finer instincts. I have also seen the wisest statesman and most pregnant speaker of our generation, a man of humble birth and ungainly manners, of little culture beyond

¹⁹³ In the fashionable part of London.

¹⁹⁴ George Hudson (1800-71), English speculator.

¹⁹⁵ Louis Napoleon, known as Napoleon III, proclaimed himself emperor in 1852.

what his own genius supplied, become more absolute in power than any monarch of modern times through the reverence of his countrymen for his honesty, his wisdom, his sincerity, his faith in God and man, and the nobly humane simplicity of his character. And I remember another whom popular respect enveloped as with a halo, the least vulgar of men, the most austere genial, and the most independent of opinion. Wherever he went he never met a stranger, but everywhere neighbors and friends proud of him as their ornament and decoration. Institutions which could bear and breed such men as Lincoln and Emerson had surely some energy for good. No, amid all the fruitless turmoil and miscarriage of the world, if there be one thing steadfast and of favorable omen, one thing to make optimism distrust its own obscure distrust, it is the rooted instinct in men to admire what is better and more beautiful than themselves. The touchstone of political and social institutions is their ability to supply them with worthy objects of this sentiment, which is the very tap-root of civilization and progress. There would seem to be no readier way of feeding it with the elements of growth and vigor than such an organization of society as will enable men to respect themselves, and so to justify them in respecting others.

Such a result is quite possible under other conditions than those of an avowedly democratical Constitution. For I take it that the real essence of democracy was fairly enough defined by the First Napoleon when he said that the French Revolution meant "la carrière ouverte aux talents"—a clear pathway for merit of whatever kind. I should be inclined to paraphrase this by calling democracy that form of society, no matter what its political classification, in which every man had a chance and knew that he had it. If a man can climb, and feels himself encouraged to climb, from a coalpit to the highest position for which he is fitted, he can well afford to be indifferent what name is given to the government under which he lives. The Bailli of Mirabeau, uncle of the more famous tribune¹⁹⁶ of that name, wrote in 1771 "The English are, in my opinion, a hundred times more agitated and more unfortunate than the very Algerines themselves, because they do not know and will not know till the

destruction of their over-swollen power, which I believe very near, whether they are monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy, and wish to play the part of all three." England has not been obliging enough to fulfil the Bailli's prophecy, and perhaps it was this very carelessness about the name, and concern about the substance of popular government, this skill in getting the best out of things as they are, in utilizing all the motives which influence men, and in giving one direction to many impulses, that has been a principal factor of her greatness and power. Perhaps it is fortunate to have an unwritten Constitution, for men are prone to be tinkering the work of their own hands, whereas they are more willing to let time and circumstance mend or modify what time and circumstance have made. All free governments, whatever their name, are in reality governments by public opinion, and it is on the quality of this public opinion that their prosperity depends. It is, therefore, their first duty to purify the element from which they draw the breath of life. With the growth of democracy grows also the fear, if not the danger, that this atmosphere may be corrupted with poisonous exhalations from lower and more malarious levels, and the question of sanitation becomes more instant and pressing. Democracy in its best sense is merely the letting in of light and air. Lord Sherbrooke¹⁹⁷ with his usual epigrammatic terseness, bids you educate your future rulers. But would this alone be a sufficient safeguard? To educate the intelligence is to enlarge the horizon of its desires and wants. And it is well that this should be so. But the enterprise must go deeper and prepare the way for satisfying those desires and wants in so far as they are legitimate. What is really ominous of danger to the existing order of things is not democracy (which, properly understood, is a conservative force), but the Socialism, which may find a fulcrum in it. If we cannot equalize conditions and fortunes any more than we can equalize the brains of men—and a very sagacious person has said that "where two men ride of a horse one must ride behind"—we can yet, perhaps, do something to correct those methods and influences that lead to enormous inequalities, and to prevent their growing more enormous. It is all very well to pooh-pooh Mr. George¹⁹⁸ and to prove him mistaken in his

¹⁹⁶ Honoré Gabriel Victor Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau (1749-91), leader in the French Revolution, president of Jacobin Club and of National Assembly

¹⁹⁷ Probably Robert Lowe, Viscount Sherbrooke (1811-92), British political leader, Home Secretary, 1873-74

¹⁹⁸ Henry George (1839-97), author of *Progress and Poverty* (1877-79) and originator of the "single tax" theory.

political economy. I do not believe that land should be divided because the quantity of it is limited by nature. Of what may this not be said? *A fortiori*,¹⁹⁹ we might on the same principle insist on a division of human wit, for I have observed that the quantity of this has been even more inconveniently limited. Mr. George himself has an inequitably large share of it. But he is right in his impelling motive; right, also, I am convinced, in insisting that humanity makes a part, by far the most important part, of political economy; and in thinking man to be of more concern and more convincing than the longest columns of figures in the world. For unless you include human nature in your addition, your total is sure to be wrong and your deductions from it fallacious. Communism means barbarism, but Socialism means, or wishes to mean, coöperation and community of interests, sympathy, the giving to the hands not so large a share as to the brains, but a larger share than hitherto in the wealth they must combine to produce—means, in short, the practical application of Christianity to life, and has in it the secret of an orderly and benign reconstruction. State Socialism would cut off the very roots in personal character—self-help, forethought, and frugality—which nourish and sustain the trunk and branches of every vigorous Commonwealth.

I do not believe in violent changes, nor do I expect them. Things in possession have a very firm grip. One of the strongest cements of society is the conviction of mankind that the state of things into which they are born is a part of the order of the universe, as natural, let us say, as that the sun should go round the earth. It is a conviction that they will not surrender except on compulsion, and a wise society should look to it that this compulsion be not put upon them. For the individual man there is no radical cure, outside of human nature itself, for the evils

¹⁹⁹ "More forcefully."

to which human nature is heir. The rule will always hold good that you must

Be your own palace or the world's your gaol.²⁰⁰

But for artificial evils, for evils that spring from want of thought, thought must find a remedy somewhere. There has been no period of time in which wealth has been more sensible of its duties than now. It builds hospitals, it establishes missions among the poor, it endows schools. It is one of the advantages of accumulated wealth, and of the leisure it renders possible, that people have time to think of the wants and sorrows of their fellows. But all these remedies are partial and palliative merely. It is as if we should apply plasters to a single pustule of the small-pox with a view of driving out the disease. The true way is to discover and to extirpate the germs. As society is now constituted these are in the air it breathes, in the water it drinks, in things that seem, and which it has always believed, to be the most innocent and healthful. The evil elements it neglects corrupt these in their springs and pollute them in their courses. Let us be of good cheer, however, remembering that the misfortunes hardest to bear are those which never come. The world has outlived much, and will outlive a great deal more, and men have contrived to be happy in it. It has shown the strength of its constitution in nothing more than in surviving the quack medicines it has tried. In the scales of the destinies brawn will never weigh so much as brain. Our healing is not in the storm or in the whirlwind, it is not in monarchies, or aristocracies, or democracies, but will be revealed by the still small voice that speaks to the conscience and the heart, prompting us to a wider and wiser humanity.

1884

1886

²⁰⁰ John Donne: "Be thine own palace, or the world's thy jail."

HERMAN MELVILLE (1819-1891)

Herman Melville is another nineteenth-century American author whose reputation has fluctuated violently. In the 1840's his stories of adventure in the South Seas were widely read and admired both in this country and in England, though some readers were offended by his severe treatment of Christian missionaries and his account of the exploitation of simple Polynesians by capitalistic countries. Even these disapprovals, however, contributed to Melville's literary notoriety, and he was generally regarded as a promising author. But the implied criticism of his age and civilization suddenly developed into bitter satire and obscure allegory which both enraged and baffled Melville's readers. Within a few years he had so small an audience that in 1857 he stopped trying to publish his prose and turned to the writing of poetry mainly for himself. He never again tried seriously to compete in professional letters, with the result that he died in literary obscurity.

The obscurity was not complete, however, for Melville had loyal friends in New York who wrote appreciative articles about him and his work at the time of his death, and a small cult grew up in England, composed at first of such men as Edward Carpenter, Theodore Watts, and Robert Buchanan, and later of Robert Louis Stevenson, J. M. Barrie, and John Masefield. In America, Melville was still read by a few people who praised him by word of mouth until Carl Van Doren finally read *Moby Dick* around 1912 and joined the band of enthusiasts. In an interesting "Foreword" to the Readers Club edition of *Billy Budd*, *Benito Cereno*, and *The Enchanted Isles*, Professor Van Doren has described some of the events which followed his discovery of Melville.

I compiled the first detailed bibliography of Melville (1917) and encouraged Raymond Weaver to undertake the first biography (1921). What is called the Melville revival in America may be said to have begun with the Melville centennial in August 1919, which Weaver celebrated by an article in the *Nation*, of which I was literary editor, and Frank Jewett Mather, later in the month, by two articles in the *Review*. Within two or three years, particularly after Weaver had published his biography and had edited, in England, a collected Melville in sixteen volumes, everybody was reading Melville or claiming to

have read him. Throughout the decade of the 1920s Melville was the subject of many swarming enthusiasms. During the 1930s he came to be a favorite subject of many scholarly investigators. In 1921 I had roused questions by writing that nobody knew American literature who did not know Melville. In 1940, revising the book in which this statement had appeared, I dropped it as now too obvious.

The disillusionment which led Melville to jettison his popularity in the 1850's by his ironical probings at the very roots of existence proved congenial to the equally disillusioned post-war generation of the 1920's. During this time Melville was probably overrated, but two decades of continued research and critical appraisal have confirmed his position as a major figure in American literature.

Herman Melville was born August 1, 1819, in New York City, in a comfortable home at No. 6 Pearl Street. He was the second son and third child of Allan and Maria Gansevoort Melville. Several of the Melvilles had led colorful lives. Herman's grandfather, Thomas Melville, had been a major in the Revolutionary army and was a successful businessman in Boston, a quaint character who still wore a cocked hat and knee-breeches, as Oliver Wendell Holmes' poem about him, "The Last Leaf," indicates. An uncle, John de Wulf, had crossed Russia in winter by dog-sled. Herman's great-uncle, who had disgraced himself by failing in business in Paris and marrying a Frenchwoman, now lived near Pittsfield, Massachusetts, like an aristocrat in exile. On his mother's side, the Gansevoorts were apparently more prosperous, though perhaps even more conventional than the Scotch Presbyterian Melvilles, being orthodox members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Biographers have regarded the proud, shallow Mrs. Glendinning in *Pierre* as a caricature of Herman Melville's mother, but actually very little is known of her.

More is known about the father, Allan Melville. He started out in business with his father in Boston, went to Albany after his marriage in 1815, then moved to New York the year of Herman's birth, where he thrived for a while as an importer of French silks, gloves, hosiery, perfumes, and other elegant luxuries. In 1824 he bought a comfortable house on

Bleecker Street, then a suburb. In a lecture to young men he voiced his own conviction that "money is the only solid substratum on which man can safely build in this world." He had traveled in Europe, spoke French with one of his servants, and enjoyed the good things that money could buy. Lewis Mumford conjectures that "in Herman Melville's earliest years, nothing ever conveyed a sense of danger or physical stress."

But Allan Melville's good fortune did not last. The economic depression of 1826 ruined his New York business. He tried in 1830 to re-establish himself in Albany, but died in 1832 of pneumonia, perhaps aggravated by worry and a sense of failure. The oldest son, Gansevoort, started a cap and fur store in Albany, and Herman, after a term or two in Albany Academy, went to work at fifteen, first as a clerk in his uncle's bank and later as clerk in his brother's store. He spent another year on his uncle Thomas Melville's farm, and in 1837 went to sea on a merchant ship bound for Liverpool.

Herman's confidence in the world and his personal pride suffered an irreparable shock over the reversal in the Melville fortune. *Redburn*, the story of the disillusionment of an innocent young man similar to the author, is not entirely autobiographical, but some of the nostalgic sentiments expressed by the chief character for his lost youth probably came from Herman Melville's own memories, e.g.:

But I must not think of those delightful days, before my father became a bankrupt, and died, and we removed from the city; for when I think of those days, something rises up in my throat. . . . I was a poor friendless boy, far away from home, and voluntarily in the way of becoming a miserable sailor for life. And what made it more bitter to me, was to think of how well off were my cousins, who were happy and rich, and lived at home with my uncles and aunts, with no thought of going to sea for a living.

There seems little doubt that at least one reason for Melville's emotional turbulence was his disappointed youth, for he also wrote in *Redburn*:

Talk not of the bitterness of middle-age and after life; a boy can feel all that, and much more, when upon his young soul the mildew has fallen; and the fruit, which with others is only blasted after ripeness, with him is nipped in the first blossom and bud. And never again can such blights be made good; they strike in too deep, and leave such a scar that the air of Paradise might not erase it.

But disappointed ambition was not the only reason for Herman Melville's becoming a sailor. During his youth American ships were famous for their speed, fortunes were being made in trade with the Orient and in the whaling industry, and writers as diverse

as Lord Byron and R. H. Dana were romanticizing faraway places and adventures on the ocean. There were also home influences stirring the imagination of young Melville, for both his father and his Uncle Thomas liked to talk of their experiences abroad. Probably again Herman Melville was writing from experience when his hero in *Redburn* confessed:

As years passed on, this continual dwelling upon foreign associations, bred in me a vague prophetic thought, that I was fated, one day or another, to be a great voyager; and that just as my father used to entertain strange gentlemen over their wine after dinner, I would hereafter be telling my own adventures to an eager auditory. And I have no doubt that this presentiment had something to do with bringing about my subsequent roving.

If we can judge from the internal evidence in *Redburn*, Melville's trip to Liverpool gave him his first concrete experience with the brutal aspects of human nature, such as the cruel discipline and degraded mores aboard a merchant ship and his observations of numbing poverty in a great seaport like Liverpool. But this trip lasted only a few months, between spring and autumn of 1837. After his return home he taught school at intervals for three years in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and Greenbush (East Albany), New York, but he also became disillusioned about the American system of common-school instruction, and on January 3, 1841, signed on at New Bedford for a whaling trip to the South Seas on the *Acushnet*. This trip, he later declared, was the only Yale and Harvard he ever knew, and that it was both educational and exciting there can be little doubt. He rounded the Horn, visited the "Enchanted Isles" (Galapagos group), and deserted ship with a companion on July 9, 1842, at Nukuhiva, in the Marquesas Islands, where he lived for a month with cannibals in the Taipi valley. He escaped from the Taipi, was rescued by an Australian whaler, and reached Tahiti. After more adventures, he left Tahiti aboard another whaler, the *Leviathan*, which probably carried him to Japan, and later to Honolulu, where he spent several months before joining the U.S. frigate *United States*, on August 17, 1843. This vessel returned home the following year, and Melville was discharged in Boston on October 14.

Melville kept no diary or notes during these eventful years and probably did not think of the literary possibilities of his experiences until after he had returned home. Then to refresh his memory and stimulate his imagination, he read all the books he could find on the South Seas and its inhabitants, mostly factual and unliterary accounts by explorers and sea captains. His first book, *Typee* (1846), was based,

therefore, both on his own observations and the experiences of other travelers, though the first-person narrative led many readers to regard the story as a true account until C. R. Anderson traced down Melville's printed sources.

Typee is still good reading, with its unaffected narrative of the escape of the author and his friend Toby from the ship, of their perilous descent through a waterfall into an unknown valley, and the suspense created by their uncertainty as to the identity of the inhabitants, whether they will be the friendly Happs or the cannibalistic Typees. They are the Typees, and they prove to be cannibals, but the narrator is held in a sort of Garden of Eden captivity. In fact, one purpose of the book seems to have been the depiction of a primitive Utopia. The childlike savages are clean, unselfish, beautiful, and happy. And Fayaway is one of the most captivating heroines in all fiction, though undoubtedly a bit shocking to many readers in 1846.

Fayaway and I reclined in the stern of the canoe, on the very best terms possible with one another, the gentle nymph occasionally placing her pipe to her lip, and exhaling the mild fumes of the tobacco, to which her rosy breath added a fresh perfume. Strange as it may seem, there is nothing in which a young and beautiful female appears to more advantage than in the act of smoking.

But she was still more charming on another day, when

. . . she disengaged from her person the ample robe of tappa which was knotted over her shoulder (for the purpose of shielding her from the sun), and spreading it out like a sail, stood erect with upraised arms in the head of the canoe. We American sailors pride ourselves upon our straight clean spars, but a prettier little mast than Fayaway made was never shipped a-board of any craft.

It is little wonder that *Typee* was both scandalous and successful, and that the author would try to repeat his first literary achievement with a similar one. The second book, *Omoo* (1847), continues the adventures of the same author-hero in the Pacific after his escape from the Taipi valley. In suspense and narrative skill it resembles *Typee*, but the difference is in Melville's critical attitude toward the exploitation of the Polynesians by the so-called civilized nations, and especially by Christian missionaries. Observing that "the Tahitians can hardly ever be said to reflect they are all impulse," and that "anything like a permanent religious impression is seldom or never produced," he decided that "there is, perhaps, no race upon earth, less disposed, by nature, to the monitions of Christianity, than the people of the South Sea." The moral and social patterns of West-

ern civilization were not suited to these tropical people.

Despite the fact that missionary societies strongly disapproved of *Omoo*, and that church papers condemned it in vigorous editorials, the book sold well, and Melville's future as a man of letters seemed assured. He married Elizabeth Shaw, daughter of Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw, of Boston, and settled in New York at 103 Fourth Avenue. In New York he was befriended by Evert and George Duyckinck, editors of the *Literary World*, and prominent in the social and literary life of the city. Intellectually they were mediocre, and within a few years Melville outgrew them, but in the first critical years of his authorship their friendship and professional advice were a great help and stimulation to him.

Melville followed up the success of *Omoo* by publishing what at first appeared to be another romance of adventure in the South Seas, *Mardi* (1849), but on more careful scrutiny this book turned out to be a highly complicated allegory and satire. Critics still do not agree on the interpretation of the allegory, though the pursuit of the blue-eyed maiden, Yillah, by the hero, Taji, is reminiscent of the adventures of the Red Cross Knight in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Yillah was evidently intended to be a spiritual symbol akin to Spenser's Una, though having lost her, Taji never finds her again, and at last in an act of abdication turns his prow into the racing tide.

The satire of *Mardi*, however, resembles *Gulliver's Travels*. Various islands visited by Taji represent the nations of Europe and America. Vivenza, for example, is the United States, and Great Britain is designated as Dominora, ruled by King Bello (John Bull?). American jingoistic pride is thus ridiculed in Chapter CLVIII.

The throng that greeted us upon landing were exceedingly boisterous.

"Whence came ye?" they cried. "Whither bound? Saw ye ever such a land as this? Is it not a great and extensive republic? Pray, observe how tall we are, just feel of our thighs, are we not a glorious people? Here, feel of our beards. Look round, look round, be not afraid, behold those palms; swear now, that this land surpasses all others. Old Bello's mountains are mole-hills to ours, his rivers, rills; his empires, villages; his palm-trees, shrubs."

Despite the conviction of the inhabitants that everyone in Vivenza is a sovereign-king, the visitors observe in "The Great Central Temple" (Capitol) a man with a collar round his neck, and the red marks of stripes upon his back. . . in the act of hoisting a tappa standard—correspondingly striped." And a voice from the gods warns these freedom-proud peo-

ple that theirs is "the best and happiest land under the sun . . . not wholly, because you, in your wisdom, decreed it: your origin and geography necessitated it." Freedom, itself, "is more social than political. And its real felicity is not to be shared. *That* is of a man's own individual getting and holding. It is not, who rules the state, but who rules me."

In the midst of this satire we also find a conviction which would soon lead Melville to the brink of intellectual annihilation:

And though all evils may be assuaged; all evils can not be done away. For evil is the chronic malady of the universe; and checked in one place, breaks forth in another.

But before taking up this theme in, respectively, his masterpiece (*Moby Dick*) and perhaps his greatest failure (*Pierre*), Melville turned his attention to a pot-boiler, *Redburn* (1849). The nature of this work has been indicated above, a semiautobiographical account of Melville's youthful trip to Liverpool as a green sailor. On December 14, 1849, he wrote to Evert Duyckinck: ". . . I hope I shall never write such a book again—tho' when a poor devil writes with duns all round him . . . what can you expect . . . but a beggarly 'Redburn'!"

Although *Redburn* is far from being one of his best works, it was not as bad as Melville thought. It is still of interest today; moreover, it may be said to have marked a turning point in Melville's intellectual life. On his way to London, for which he sailed in October, 1849, to arrange for the English publication of *White-Jacket*, Melville wrote in his diary: "This time to-morrow I shall be on land, and press English earth after the lapse of ten years—then a sailor, now H. M. author of *Peedee*, *Hullabaloo*, and *Pog-dog*." And earlier in the year he had written Evert Duyckinck, apropos Emerson, "I love all men who *dive* . . . the whole corps of thought-divers, that have been diving and coming up again with blood-shot eyes since the world began."

Before beginning his "thought-diving" in earnest, Melville published *White-Jacket* (1850), a sea-story based in part on his knowledge of life aboard a man-of-war. There was already at this time great agitation in Congress for laws to alleviate the cruelty of naval punishment—especially flogging—for minor offenses, and Melville both capitalized on the public interest in the subject and contributed to the popular demand for reform.

After his return to the United States in January, 1850, Melville moved his family to "Arrowhead," near Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Hawthorne lived only a few miles away, at Lenox, and the two authors be-

came intimate friends. Some biographers have blamed Hawthorne for not responding more warmly to Melville's friendly advances, but recent evidence indicates that Hawthorne was more sympathetic and responsive than Lewis Mumford and Raymond Weaver believed. In fact, probably no other person encouraged and stimulated Melville's intellectual growth as much as Hawthorne. At the time they met, on August 5, 1850, each author had recently discovered the works of the other. Hawthorne was reading all of Melville's published romances, and Melville was writing a long review of *Mosses from an Old Manse*, which the Duyckincks printed, under a pseudonym, in their *Literary World* on August 17 and 24. Melville was especially attracted by the "dark" side of Hawthorne and compared his handling of tragic themes to Shakespeare's "short, quick probings at the very axis of reality." While Melville was at work on *Moby Dick* he declared that "Hawthorne has dropped germinous seeds into my soul."

In the months immediately preceding Hawthorne's removal from Lenox in November, 1851, Melville wrote his new friend long letters which provide intimate and revealing glimpses into his mind during this crucial period. In June he confessed: "What I feel most moved to write, that is banned,—it will not pay. Yet altogether, write the *other* way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches." Even as he worked on the "Whale" Melville had a conviction that "Though I wrote the Gospels in this century, I should die in the gutter." When he thought of fame, he resented going down to posterity as the "man who lived among the cannibals!" But despite this mood of bitter discouragement and resentment, Melville was aware of a quickening growth of his mind and talent:

My development has been all within a few years past. . . . Until I was twenty-five, I had no development at all. From my twenty-fifth year I date my life. Three weeks have scarcely passed, at any time between then and now, that I have not unfolded within myself. But I feel that I am now come to the inmost leaf of the bulb, and that shortly the flower must fall to the mould.

This was Melville's mood before *Moby Dick* reached the public, but in November, after the book had been published both in England and the United States, he experienced a new surge of hope when he received Hawthorne's "joy-giving and exultation-breeding letter" of praise: "A sense of unspeakable security is in me this moment, on account of your having understood the book. I have written a wicked book, and I feel spotless as the lamb."

Like *Mardi*, *Moby Dick* is another story of an epic

search for the unattainable. A half-crazed old sea captain, Ahab, whose leg has been bitten off by the fabulous White Whale, Moby Dick, turns a whaling expedition into a personal quest for revenge, eventually destroying his ship and everyone on it except the author-narrator, Ishmael. To Ahab the White Whale is the "monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung." This strange voyage in search of a monster who personifies demoniac forces in nature is so obviously symbolical, and is developed with such a variety of symbolisms, that many readers have regarded it as an outright allegory, but in a letter dated January 8, 1852, Melville denied to Mrs. Hawthorne that he had consciously written an allegory. The question is too complicated for discussion here, but it will repay further study. The important fact is that Herman Melville himself was now, with all his energies, probing "at the very axis of reality."

The following year (1852) he continued the probing, with what now amounted almost to fanaticism, in another symbolical story, *Pierre*. There can be little doubt that this book reflects Melville's own spiritual confusion, but it is probably less autobiographical than *Redburn*. The hero is Pierre Glendinning, gentle born, adored by his proud widowed mother. He loves and is engaged to Lucy Tartan, an almost ideal mate for him. But Pierre discovers that a mysterious, dark-haired girl, Isabel, who lives in poverty near by, is in reality his illegitimate half-sister. To make amends for his father's wrong and to protect his mother, Pierre decides to support her in the city under the pretense of having eloped with her. In the city Pierre struggles to write the kind of novel Melville dreamed of writing, but everything goes wrong. The mother dies of wounded pride, Pierre is goaded into committing murder, and he and Isabel finally take poison. This melodramatic plot, with the implication of incest, so shocked the few American readers who had survived *Moby Dick* that presently Melville had practically no audience whatever.

But the author seems not to have realized his plight immediately. Through 1853-56 he contributed stories and essays to *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* and *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, but these fugitive pieces did not pay enough to live on. On December 10, 1853, a fire at Harper's destroyed his entire stock of books, and since there was not sufficient demand to justify the expense of reprinting them, Melville's literary reputation seemed almost on the point of vanishing. However, he did not give up the struggle for several years. In 1855 he published *Israel*

Potter, a story of the American Revolution which he rewrote from a chapbook version published originally in 1824. It is the account of an American soldier captured by the British, who spent nearly half a century in Great Britain living a hand-to-mouth existence. The following year Melville published *The Piazza Tales*, a collection of stories which might have redeemed his reputation if it had not already sunk so low. This book contained the brilliant novelette, "Benito Cereno," and "The Encantadas, or, Enchanted Isles," both of which had appeared in *Putnam's* in 1854 and 1855 respectively. The latter work, impressionistic essays on the mysterious Galapagos Islands, shows a strong influence of Sir Thomas Browne and other seventeenth-century writers who were favorites of Melville. For the modern student *The Piazza Tales* contains some of Melville's most interesting prose. But this period of writing culminated in 1857 with the publication of the author's most angry satire, *The Confidence Man*, a bitter indictment of the shams of the society in which Melville had failed to find a market for his talents.

Meanwhile his family had increased to two sons and two daughters, whom Melville could not support without the help of his wife's family or his own relatives. For three years he tried giving lectures on Roman statuary and the South Seas, but this was not sufficiently lucrative or congenial. In 1860 he sailed to San Francisco with his brother Thomas, who was captain of a clipper, returning by way of Panama. He attempted, without success, to secure a consulship from President Lincoln. In 1863 he moved his family back to New York City, and three years later he was appointed District Inspector of Customs, a position which he held for nearly twenty years.

For two decades, while Melville supported his family by his work at the customs house, he wrote very little. During the Civil War he had written some war poems, which he had published in 1866 as *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War*, and he continued to write poems for his own amusement. His most ambitious poem, *Clarel*, a long narrative of a trip to the Holy Land and speculations on theology and philosophy, was published at the expense of his uncle, Peter Gansevoort, in 1876, but attracted little attention, and is hardly ever read today except by the most devoted Melville admirers. Although some critics have tried to find beauties in Melville's poems, to most readers they are prosy and flat. They do, however, reveal the author's continued interest in certain fundamental ideas and indicate the curve of his mental development.

When Melville died on September 28, 1891, he

left in manuscript a novelette, *Billy Budd*, which was not published until 1924, though written around 1888-91. Artistically, it is perhaps Melville's most unified and consistent story. *Moby Dick* and *Pierre* are turgid, rambling, and often erratic in style—especially *Pierre*. As tragic as either of these works, *Billy Budd* is without their rhetorical eccentricities. It is the story of a simple but incorruptible sailor whose very innocence involves him in a crime for which officers who love him as a son are forced by the code of the articles of war to hang him. But he dies blessing the captain who had condemned him to death. The English biographer, John Freeman, says that whereas "*Moby Dick* ends in darkness and desolation . . . *Billy Budd* ends in a brightness of escape, such as the apostle saw when he exclaimed, 'O death, where is thy sting?'" Freeman sees a reflection of Melville's own serenity and final reconciliation to life in Billy's transfiguration:

The hull, deliberately recovering from the periodic roll to leeward, was just regaining an even keel—when the last signal, the preconcerted dumb one, was given. At the same moment it chanced that the vapoury fleece hanging low in the east was shot through with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision; and simultaneously therewith, watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces, Billy ascended; and ascending took the full rose of the dawn.

But Melville did not choose to end his story here.

He felt compelled to add three more short chapters, though well aware of his literary offense:

The symmetry of form attainable in pure fiction cannot so readily be achieved in a narration essentially having less to do with fable than with fact. Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges; hence the conclusion of such a narration is apt to be less finished than an architectural finial.

In one of these epilogue chapters the *Indomitable* is conquered by the *Athéiste*, "the aptest name . . . ever given to a warship." The allegorical implications are reminiscent of the humanitarian attitudes of the author of *Typee*, *Omoo*, *Mardi*, and *White-Jacket*. And in the distorted account of Billy Budd's "crime" that survived we have the irony of *Pierre*. To judge by a note that Melville crossed out in the manuscript, he once planned to end with Chapter xxv: "Here ends a story not unwarranted in this incongruous world of ours—innocence and infirmity, spiritual depravity and fair respite." To heighten the irony in his presentation of the ways of "this incongruous world," Melville added still another chapter, in which even the sailors who worshipped Billy, treasure a chip of his gibbet as "a piece of the Cross," assume his guilt and embalm his memory in a traditional ballad of the condemned murderer. Truly, Herman Melville was never reconciled to the morality of this incongruous man-of-war world of ours.

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"Hawthorne and His Mosses"¹

BY A VIRGINIAN SPENDING JULY IN VERMONT

A papered chamber in a fine old farm-house, a mile from any other dwelling, and dipped to the caves in foliage—surrounded by mountains, old woods, and Indian ponds,—this, surely, is the place to write of Hawthorne. Some charm is in this northern air, for love and duty seem both impelling to the task. A man of deep and noble nature has seized me in this seclusion. His wild, witch-voice rings through me, or, in softer cadences, I seem to hear it in the songs of the hill-side birds that sing in the larch trees at my window.

Would that all excellent books were foundlings, without father or mother, that so it might be we could glorify them, without including their ostensible authors! Nor would any true man take exception to this, least of all, he who writes, "When the Artist rises high enough to achieve the Beautiful, the symbol by which he makes it perceptible to mortal senses becomes of little value in his eyes, while his spirit possesses itself in the enjoyment of the reality."

But more than this I know not what would be the right name to put on the title-page of an excellent book; but this I feel, that the names of all fine authors

are fictitious ones, far more so than that of Junius, simply standing, as they do, for the mystical, ever-eluding spirit of all beauty, which ubiquitously possesses men of genius. Purely imaginative as this fancy may appear, it nevertheless seems to receive some warrant from the fact, that on a personal interview no great author has ever come up to the idea of his reader. But that dust of which our bodies are composed, how can it fitly express the nobler intelligences among us? With reverence be it spoken, that not even in the case of one deemed more than man, not even in our Saviour, did his visible frame betoken anything of the augustness of the nature within. Else, how could those Jewish eyewitnesses fail to see heaven in his glance!

It is curious how a man may travel along a country road, and yet miss the grandest or sweetest of prospects by reason of an intervening hedge, so like all other hedges, as in no way to hint of the wide landscape beyond. So has it been with me concerning the enchanting landscape in the soul of this Hawthorne, this most excellent Man of Mosses. His "Old Manse" has been written now four years, but I never read it till a day or two since I had seen it in the book-stores—I heard of it often—even had it recommended to me by a tasteful friend, as a rare, quiet book, perhaps too deserving of popularity to be popular. But there are so many books called "excellent," and so much unpopular merit, that amid the thick 30 stir of other things, the hint of my tasteful friend was

¹ Published anonymously in the *Literary World* (edited by Melville's friends, the Duyckincks), August 17 and 24, 1850. The manuscript, now in the Duyckinck Collection in the New York Public Library, identifies it as Melville's. The text given here, by the kind permission of Willard Thorp and the American Book Company, is that of Professor Thorp's excellent *Herman Melville: Representative Selections* (1938), in which typographical errors have been corrected from the original MSS.

disregarded; and for four years the Mosses on the Old Manse never refreshed me with their perennial green. It may be, however, that all this while the book, like wine, was only improving in flavor and body. At any rate, it so chanced that this long procrastination eventuated in a happy result. At breakfast the other day, a mountain girl, a cousin of mine, who for the last two weeks has every morning helped me to strawberries and raspberries, which, like the roses and pearls in the fairy tale, seemed to fall into the saucer from those strawberry-beds, her cheeks—this delightful creature, this charming Cherry says to me—"I see you spend your mornings in the hay-mow; and yesterday I found there 'Dwight's Travels in New England.' Now I have something far better than that, something more congenial to our summer on these hills. Take these raspberries, and then I will give you some moss." "Moss!" said I. "Yes, and you must take it to the barn with you, and good-bye to 'Dwight.'"

With that she left me, and soon returned with a volume, verdantly bound, and garnished with a curious frontispiece in green; nothing less than a fragment of real moss, cunningly pressed to a fly-leaf. "Why, this," said I, spilling my raspberries, "this is the 'Mosses from an Old Manse.'" "Yes," said cousin Cherry, "yes, it is that flowery Hawthorne." "Hawthorne and Mosses," said I, "no more: it is morning: it is July in the country: and I am off for the barn."

Stretched on that new mown clover, the hill-side breeze blowing over me through the wide barn-door, and soothed by the hum of the bees in the meadows around, how magically stole over me this Mossy Man! and how amply, how bountifully, did he redeem that delicious promise to his guests in the Old Manse, of whom it is written—"Others could give them pleasure, or amusement, or instruction—these could be picked up anywhere—but it was for me to give them rest. Rest, in a life of trouble! What better could be done for weary and world-worn spirits? What better could be done for anybody, who came within our magic circle, than to throw the spell of a magic spirit over him?" So all that day, half-buried in the new clover, I watched this Hawthorne's "Assyrian dawn, and Paphian sunset and moonrise, from the summit of our Eastern Hill." ²

The soft ravishments of the man spun me round

² Allusions to passage in first sketch of the volume.

about in a web of dreams, and when the book was closed, when the spell was over, this wizard "dismissed me with but misty reminiscences, as if I had been dreaming of him."

What a wild moonlight of contemplative humor bathes that Old Manse! the rich and rare distilment of a spicy and slowly-oozing heart. No rollicking rudeness, no gross fun fed on fat dinners, and bred in the lees of wine,—but a humor so spiritually gentle, so high, so deep, and yet so richly relishable, that it were hardly inappropriate in an angel. It is the very religion of mirth; for nothing so human but it may be advanced to that. The orchard of the Old Manse seems the visible type of the fine mind that has described it—those twisted and contorted old trees, "that stretch out their crooked branches, and take such hold of the imagination, that we remember them as humorists and odd-fellows." And then, as surrounded by these grotesque forms, and hushed in the noon-day repose of this Hawthorne's spell, how aptly might the still fall of his ruddy thoughts into your soul be symbolized by "the thump of a great apple, in the stillest afternoon, falling without a breath of wind, from the mere necessity of perfect ripeness!" For no less ripe than ruddy are the apples of the thoughts and fancies in this sweet Man of Mosses—

Buds and Bird-voices ³

³⁰ What a delicious thing is that! 'Will the world ever be so decayed, that Spring may not renew its greenness?' And the "Fire-Worship." Was ever the hearth so glorified into an altar before? The mere title of that piece is better than any common work in fifty folio volumes. How exquisite is this:—"Nor did it lessen the charm of his soft, familiar courtesy and helpfulness, that the mighty spirit, were opportunity offered him, would run riot through the peaceful house, wrap its inmates in his terrible embrace, and leave nothing of them save their whitened bones. This possibility of mad destruction only made his domestic kindness the more beautiful and touching. It was so sweet of him, being endowed with such power, to dwell, day after day, and one long, lonesome night after another, on the dusky hearth, only now and then betraying his wild nature, by thrusting his red tongue out of the chimney-top! True, he had done much mischief in the world, and was pretty

³ Title of eighth essay in the *Mosses*.

certain to do more, but his warm heart atoned for all, He was kindly to the race of man "

But he has still other apples, not quite so ruddy, though full as ripe,—apples, that have been left to wither on the tree, after the pleasant autumn gathering is past The sketch of "The Old Apple-Dealer" is conceived in the subtlest spirit of sadness, he whose "subdued and nerveless boyhood prefigured his abortive prime, which, likewise, contained within itself the prophecy and image of his lean and torpid age " 10 Such touches as are in this piece cannot proceed from any common heart They argue such a depth of tenderness, such a boundless sympathy with all forms of being, such an omnipresent love, that we must needs say that this Hawthorne is here almost alone in his generation,—at least, in the artistic manifestation of these things Still more Such touches as these,—and many, very many similar ones, all through his chapters—furnish clues whereby we enter a little way into the intricate, profound heart 20 where they originated And we see that suffering, some time or other and in some shape or other—this only can enable any man to depict it in others All over him, Hawthorne's melancholy rests like an Indian-summer, which, though bathing a whole country in one softness, still reveals the distinctive hue of every towering hill and each far-winding vale.

But it is the least part of genius that attracts admiration Where Hawthorne is known, he seems to be deemed a pleasant writer, with a pleasant style,—a 30 sequestered, harmless man, from whom any deep and weighty thing would hardly be anticipated—a man who means no meanings But there is no man, in whom humor and love, like mountain peaks, soar to such a rapt height as to receive the irradiations of the upper skies,—there is no man in whom humor and love are developed in that high form called genius, no such man can exist without also possessing, as the indispensable complement of these, a great, deep intellect, which drops down into the universe like a 40 plummet Or, love and humor are only the eyes through which such an intellect views this world The great beauty in such a mind is but the product of its strength What, to all readers, can be more charming than the piece entitled "Monsieur du Miroir"; and to a reader at all capable of fully fathoming it, what, at the same time, can possess more mystical depth of meaning?—yes, there he sits and looks at me,—this "shape of mystery," this "identical Mon-

sieur du Miroir " "Methinks I should tremble now, were his wizard power of gliding through all impediments in search of me, to place him suddenly before my eyes "

How profound, nay appalling is the moral evolved by the "Earth's Holocaust", where—beginning with the hollow follies and affectations of the world,—all vanities and empty theories and forms are, one after another, and by an admirably graduated, growing 10 comprehensiveness, thrown into the allegorical fire, till, at length, nothing is left but the all-engendering heart of man, which remaining still unconsumed, the great conflagration is naught

Of a piece with this, is the "Intelligence Office," a wondrous symbolizing of the secret workings in men's souls There are other sketches still more charged with ponderous import.

"The Christmas Banquet," and "The Bosom Serpent," would be fine subjects for a curious and elaborate analysis, touching the conjectural parts of the mind that produced them For spite of all the Indian-summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne's soul, the other side—like the dark half of the physical sphere—is shrouded in a blackness, ten times black But this darkness but gives more effect to the ever-moving dawn, that for ever advances through it, and circumnavigates his world. Whether Hawthorne has simply availed himself of this mystical blackness as a means to the wondrous effect he 30 makes it to produce in his lights and shades, or whether there really lurks in him, perhaps unknown to himself, a touch of Puritanic gloom,—this, I cannot altogether tell Certain it is, however, that this great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free. For, in certain moods, no man can weigh this world without throwing in something, somehow like Original Sin, to strike the un- 40 even balance At all events, perhaps no writer has ever wielded this terrific thought with greater terror than this same harmless Hawthorne. Still more: this black concert pervades him through and through. You may be witched by his sunlight,—transported by the bright gildings in the skies he builds over you; but there is the blackness of darkness beyond; and even his bright gildings but fringe and play upon the edges of thunderclouds In one word, the world

is mistaken in this Nathaniel Hawthorne. He himself must often have smiled at its absurd misconception of him. He is immeasurably deeper than the plummet of the mere critic. For it is not the brain that can test such a man; it is only the heart. You cannot come to know greatness by inspecting it; there is no glimpse to be caught of it, except by intuition: you need not ring it, you but touch it, and you find it is gold.

Now, it is that blackness in Hawthorne, of which I have spoken, that so fixes and fascinates me. It may be, nevertheless, that it is too largely developed in him. Perhaps he does not give us a ray of his light for every shade of his dark. But however this may be, this blackness it is that furnishes the infinite obscure of his back-ground,—that back-ground, against which Shakspeare plays his grandest conceits, the things that have made for Shakspeare his loftiest but most circumscribed renown, as the profoundest of thinkers. For by philosophers Shakspeare is not adored as the great man of tragedy and comedy.—“Off with his head; so much for Buckingham!” This sort of rant, interlined by another hand, brings down the house,—those mistaken souls, who dream of Shakspeare as a mere man of Richard-the-Third humps and Macbeth daggers. But it is those deep far-away things in him; those occasional flashings-forth of the intuitive Truth in him; those short, quick probings at the very axis of reality;—these are the things that make Shakspeare, Shakspeare. Through the mouths of the dark characters of Hamlet, Timon, Lear, and Iago, he craftily says, or sometimes insinuates the things which we feel to be so terrifically true, that it were all but madness for any good man, in his own proper character, to utter, or even hint of them. Tormented into desperation, Lear, the frantic king, tears off the mask, and speaks the same madness of vital truth. But, as I before said, it is the least part of genius that attracts admiration. And so, much of the blind, unbridled admiration that has been heaped upon Shakspeare, has been lavished upon the least part of him. And few of his endless commentators and critics seem to have remembered, or even perceived, that the immediate products of a great mind are not so great as that undeveloped and sometimes undevelopable yet dimly-discernible greatness, to which those immediate products are but the infallible indices. In Shakspeare’s tomb lies infinitely more than Shakspeare ever wrote. And if I magnify Shakspeare,

it is not so much for what he did do as for what he did not do, or refrained from doing. For in this world of lies, Truth is forced to fly like a scared white doe in the woodlands; and only by cunning glimpses will she reveal herself, as in Shakspeare and other masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth,—even though it be covertly and by snatches.

But if this view of the all-popular Shakspeare be seldom taken by his readers, and if very few who extol him have ever read him deeply, or perhaps, only have seen him on the tricky stage (which alone made, and is still making him his mere mob renown)—if few men have time, or patience, or palate, for the spiritual truth as it is in that great genius;—it is then no matter of surprise, that in a contemporaneous age, Nathaniel Hawthorne is a man as yet almost utterly mistaken among men. Here and there, in some quiet arm-chair in the noisy town, or some deep nook among the noiseless mountains, he may be appreciated for something of what he is. But unlike Shakspeare, who was forced to the contrary course by circumstances, Hawthorne (either from simple disinclination, or else from inaptitude) refrains from all the popularizing noise and show of broad farce and blood-besmeared tragedy; content with the still, rich utterance of a great intellect in repose, and which sends few thoughts into circulation, except they be arterialized at his large warm lungs, and expanded in his honest heart.

Nor need you fix upon that blackness in him, if it suit you not. Nor, indeed, will all readers discern it; for it is, mostly, insinuated to those who may best understand it, and account for it; it is not obtruded upon every one alike.

Some may start to read of Shakspeare and Hawthorne on the same page. They may say, that if an illustration were needed, a lesser light might have sufficed to elucidate this Hawthorne, this small man of yesterday. But I am not willingly one of those who, as touching Shakspeare at least, exemplify the maxim of Rochefoucauld,⁴ that “we exalt the reputation of some, in order to depress that of others”;—who, to teach all noble-souled aspirants that there is no hope for them, pronounce Shakspeare absolutely unapproachable. But Shakspeare has been approached. There are minds that have gone as far as Shakspeare into the universe. And hardly a mortal

⁴ François de La Rochefoucauld (1613–80), French moralist, famous for his maxims.

man, who, at some time or other, has not felt as great thoughts in him as any you will find in Hamlet. We must not inferentially malign mankind for the sake of any one man, whoever he may be. This is too cheap a purchase of contentment for conscious mediocrity to make. Besides, this absolute and unconditional adoration of Shakspeare has grown to be a part of our Anglo-Saxon superstitions. The Thirty-Nine Articles are now Forty.⁵ Intolerance has come to exist in this matter. You must believe in Shakspeare's unapproachability, or quit the country. But what sort of a belief is this for an American, a man who is bound to carry republican progressiveness into Literature as well as into Life? Believe me, my friends, that men, not very much inferior to Shakspeare, are this day being born on the banks of the Ohio. And the day will come when you shall say, Who reads a book by an Englishman that is a modern?⁶ The great mistake seems to be, that even with those Americans who look forward to the coming of a great literary genius among us, so they somehow fancy he will come in the costume of Queen Elizabeth's day, be a writer of dramas founded upon old English history or the tales of Boccaccio. Whereas, great geniuses are parts of the times, they themselves are the times, and possess a correspondent coloring. It is of a piece with the Jews, who, while their Shiloh was meekly walking in their streets, were still praying for his magnificent coming, looking for him in a chariot, who was already among them on an ass. Nor must we forget that, in his own lifetime, so Shakspeare was not Shakspeare, but only Master William Shakspeare of the shrewd, thriving business firm of Condell, Shakspeare & Co., proprietors of the Globe Theatre in London, and by a courtly author, of the name of Chettle, was looked at as an "upstart crow," beautified "with other birds' feathers."⁷ For, mark it well, imitation is often the first charge brought against real originality. Why this is so, there is not space to set forth here. You must have plenty of sea-room to tell the Truth in, especially when it so seems to have an aspect of newness, as America did in 1492, though it was then just as old, and perhaps older than Asia, only those sagacious philosophers,

the common sailors, had never seen it before, swearing it was all water and moonshine there.

Now I do not say that Nathaniel of Salem is a greater than William of Avon, or as great. But the difference between the two men is by no means immeasurable. Not a very great deal more, and Nathaniel were verily William.

This, too, I mean, that if Shakspeare has not been equalled, give the world time, and he is sure to be surpassed, in one hemisphere or the other. Nor will it at all do to say, that the world is getting grey and grizzled now, and has lost that fresh charm which she wore of old, and by virtue of which the great poets of past times made themselves what we esteem them to be. Not so. The world is as young to day as when it was created, and this Vermont morning dew is as wet to my feet, as Eden's dew to Adam's. Nor has nature been all over rinsacked by our progenitors, so that no new charms and mysteries remain for this latter generation to find. Far from it. The trillionth part has not yet been said, and all that has been said, but multiplies the avenues to what remains to be said. It is not so much paucity as superabundance of material that seems to incapacitate modern authors.

Let America, then, prize and cherish her writers, yea, let her glorify them. They are not so many in number as to exhaust her good will. And while she has good kith and kin of her own, to take to her bosom, let her not lavish her embraces upon the household of an alien. For believe it or not, England, after all, is in many things an alien to us. China has more bonds of real love for us than she. But even were there no strong literary individualities among us, as there are some dozens at least, nevertheless, let America first praise mediocrity even, in her own children, before she praises (for everywhere, merit demands acknowledgment from every one) the best excellence in the children of any other land. Let her own authors, I say, have the priority of appreciation. I was much pleased with a hot-headed Carolina cousin of mine, who once said,—“If there were no other American to stand by, in literature, why, then, I would stand by Pop Emmons and his ‘Fredonad,’⁸ and till a better epic came along swear it was not very far behind the Iliad.” Take away the words, and in spirit he was sound.

⁵ Statement of doctrines of the reformed Church of England.

⁶ Reference to Sidney Smith's remark in 1820: “In the four quarters of the globe who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue?” This remark by the English clergyman and wit galled Americans for two or three generations.

⁷ Robert Greene, not Chettle, thus slandered Shakspeare in *A Groatsworth of Wit*.

⁸ One of the most unsuccessful attempts to write an American epic was Richard Emmons' *Fredonad, or Independence Preserved—an Epic Poem of the War of 1812*.

Not that American genius needs patronage in order to expand. For that explosive sort of stuff will expand though screwed up in a vice, and burst it, though it were triple steel. It is for the nation's sake, and not for her authors' sake, that I would have America be heedful of the increasing greatness among her writers. For how great the shame, if other nations should be before her, in crowning her heroes of the pen! But this is almost the case now. American authors have received more just and discriminating ¹⁰ praise (however loftily and ridiculously given, in certain cases) even from some Englishmen, than from their own countrymen. There are hardly five critics in America; and several of them are asleep. As for patronage, it is the American author who now patronizes his country, and not his country him. And if at times some among them appeal to the people for more recognition, it is not always with selfish motives, but patriotic ones.

It is true that but few of them as yet have evinced ²⁰ that decided originality which merits great praise. But that graceful writer, who perhaps of all Americans has received the most plaudits from his own country for his productions,—that very popular and amiable writer, however good and self-reliant in many things, perhaps owes his chief reputation to the self-acknowledged imitation of a foreign model, and to the studied avoidance of all topics but smooth ones.⁹ But it is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation. He who has never failed somewhere, ³⁰ that man cannot be great. Failure is the true test of greatness. And if it be said, that continual success is a proof that a man wisely knows his powers,—it is only to be added, that, in that case, he knows them to be small. Let us believe it, then, once for all, that there is no hope for us in these smooth, pleasing writers that know their powers. Without malice, but to speak the plain fact, they but furnish an appendix to Goldsmith, and other English authors. And we want no American Goldsmiths; nay, we want no American ⁴⁰ Miltons. It were the vilest thing you could say of a true American author, that he were an American Tompkins.¹⁰ Call him an American and have done, for you cannot say a nobler thing of him. But it is

not meant that all American writers should studiously cleave to nationality in their writings, only this, no American writer should write like an Englishman or a Frenchman, let him write like a man, for then he will be sure to write like an American. Let us away with this leaven of literary flunkeyism towards England. If either must play the flunkey in this thing, let England do it, not us. While we are rapidly preparing for that political supremacy among the nations ¹⁰ which prophetically awaits us at the close of the present century, in a literary point of view, we are deplorably unprepared for it, and we seem studious to remain so. Hitherto, reasons might have existed why this should be, but no good reason exists now. And all that is requisite to amendment in this matter, is simply this: that while freely acknowledging all excellence everywhere, we should refrain from unduly lauding foreign writers, and, at the same time, duly recognize meritorious writers that are our own,—those writers who breathe that unshackled, democratic spirit of Christianity in all things, which now takes the practical lead in this world, though at the same time led by ourselves—us Americans. Let us boldly condemn all imitation, though it comes to us graceful and fragrant as the morning, and foster all originality, though at first it be crabbed and ugly as our own pine knots. And if any of our authors fail, or seem to fail, then, in the words of my enthusiastic Carolina cousin, let us clap him on the shoulder, and back him against all Europe for his second round. The truth is, that in one point of view, this matter of a national literature has come to such a pass with us, that in some sense we must turn bullies, else the day is lost, or superiority so far beyond us, that we can hardly say it will ever be ours.

And now, my countrymen, as an excellent author of your own flesh and blood,—an unimitating, and, perhaps, in his way, an unimitable man—whom better can I commend to you, in the first place, than Nathaniel Hawthorne. He is one of the new, and far better generation of your writers. The smell of your beeches and hemlocks is upon him, your own broad prairies are in his soul; and if you travel away inland into his deep and noble nature, you will hear the far roar of his Niagara. Give not over to future generations the glad duty of acknowledging him for what he is. Take that joy to yourself, in your own generation; and so shall he feel those grateful impulses on him, that may possibly prompt him to the full flower

⁹ Evidently Washington Irving

¹⁰ Thorp reports that "Melville originally wrote 'Milton' instead of 'Tompkins'." This vehement passage was even more downright in its first draft, "being more nationalistic, and sarcastic not only toward England but also toward the 'Bostonian leaven of literary flunkeyism'."

of some still greater achievement in your eyes And by confessing him you thereby confess others, you brace the whole brotherhood For genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round

In treating of Hawthorne, or rather of Hawthorne in his writings (for I never saw the man,¹¹ and in the chances of a quiet plantation life, remote from his haunts, perhaps never shall), in treating of his works, I say, I have thus far omitted all mention of his *"Twice Told Tales,"* and *"Scarlet Letter"* Both are excellent, but full of such manifold, strange, and diffusive beauties, that time would all but fail me to point the half of them out But there are things in those two books, which, had they been written in England a century ago, Nathaniel Hawthorne had utterly displaced many of the bright names we now revere on authority¹² But I am content to leave Hawthorne to himself, and to the infallible finding of posterity, and however great may be the praise I have bestowed upon him, I feel that in so doing I have more served and honored myself, than him For, at bottom, great excellence is praise enough to itself, but the feeling of a sincere and appreciative love and admiration towards it, this is relieved by utterance, and warm, honest praise, ever leaves a pleasant flavor in the mouth, and it is an honorable thing to confess to what is honorable in others

But I cannot leave my subject yet No man can ever read a fine author, and relish him to his very bones while he reads, without subsequently fancying to himself some ideal image of the man and his mind And if you rightly look for it, you will almost always find that the author himself has somewhere furnished you with his own picture For poets (whether in prose or verse), being painters of nature, are like their brethren of the pencil, the true portrait-painters, who, in the multitude of likenesses to be sketched, do not invariably omit their own, and in all high instances, they paint them without any vanity, though at times with a lurking something, that would take several pages to properly define

I submit it, then, to those best acquainted with the man personally, whether the following is not

Nathaniel Hawthorne,—and to himself, whether something involved in it does not express the temper of his mind,—that lasting temper of all true, candid men—a seeker, not a finder yet —

"A man now entered in neglected attire, with the aspect of a thinker but somewhat too rough hewn and brawny for a scholar His face was full of sturdy vigor, with some finer and keener attribute beneath, though harsh at first, it was tempered with the glow of a large, warm heart, which had force enough to heat his powerful intellect through and through He advanced to the Intelligencer, and looked at him with a glance of such stein sincerity, that perhaps few secrets were beyond its scope

" 'I seek for Truth,' said he "

* * *

Twenty four hours have elapsed since writing the foregoing I have just returned from the hay mow, changed more and more with love and admiration of Hawthorne For I have just been gleaning through the Mosses, picking up many things here and there that that had previously escaped me And I found that but to glean after this man, is better than to be in at the harvest of others To be frank (though, perhaps, rather foolish) notwithstanding what I wrote yesterday of these Mosses, I had not then culled them all, but had, nevertheless, been sufficiently sensible of the subtle essence in them, as to write as I did To what infinite height of loving wonder and admiration I may yet be borne, when by repeatedly banqueting on these Mosses I shall have thoroughly incorporated their whole stuff into my being,—that, I cannot tell But already I feel that this Hawthorne has dropped germinous seeds into my soul He expands and deepens down, the more I contemplate him, and further and further, shoots his strong New England roots in the hot soil of my Southern soul

By careful reference to the "Table of Contents," I now find that I have gone through all the sketches, but that when I yesterday wrote, I had not at all read two particular pieces, to which I now desire to call special attention,—*"A Select Party,"* and *"Young Goodman Brown"* Here, be it said to all those whom this poor fugitive scrawl of mine may tempt to the perusal of the "Mosses," that they must on no account suffer themselves to be trifled with, disappointed, or deceived by the triviality of many of the titles to these sketches For in more than one in-

¹¹ True when Melville wrote this review in July, but on August 5 he met Hawthorne, then living at Lenox, only six miles away from Pittsfield

¹² Melville originally made the sentence end 'displaced Oliver Goldsmith and many another brighter name than that', Willard Thorp

stance, the title utterly belies the piece. It is as if rustic demijohns containing the very best and costliest of Falernian and Tokay, were labelled "Cider," "Perry," and "Elder-berry wine." The truth seems to be, that like many other geniuses, this Man of Mosses takes great delight in hoodwinking the world.—at least, with respect to himself. Personally, I doubt not that he rather prefers to be generally esteemed but a so-so sort of author, being willing to reserve the thorough and acute appreciation of what he is, to that party most qualified to judge—that is, to himself. Besides, at the bottom of their natures, men like Hawthorne, in many things, deem the plaudits of the public such strong presumptive evidence of mediocrity in the object of them, that it would in some degree render them doubtful of their own powers, did they hear much and vociferous braying concerning them in the public pastures. True, I have been braying myself (if you please to be witty enough to have it so), but then I claim to be the first that has so brayed in this particular matter, and therefore, while pleading guilty to the charge, still claim all the merit due to originality.

But with whatever motive, playful or profound, Nathaniel Hawthorne has chosen to entitle his pieces in the manner he has, it is certain that some of them are directly calculated to deceive—egregiously deceive, the superficial skimmer of pages. To be downright and candid once more, let me cheerfully say, that two of these titles did dolefully dupe no less an eagle-eyed reader than myself, and that, too, after I had been impressed with a sense of the great depth and breadth of this American man. "Who in the name of thunder" (as the country-people say in this neighborhood), "who in the name of thunder, would anticipate any marvel in a piece entitled 'Young Goodman Brown?'" You would of course suppose that it was a simple little tale, intended as a supplement to "Goody Two Shoes." Whereas, it is deep as Dante, nor can you finish it, without addressing the author in his own words—"It is yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin." And with Young Goodman, too, in allegorical pursuit of his Puritan wife, you cry out in your anguish.

Now this same piece, entitled "Young Goodman

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation, and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying,—"Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness."

Brown," is one of the two that I had not all read yesterday; and I allude to it now, because it is, in itself, such a strong positive illustration of that blackness in Hawthorne, which I had assumed from the mere occasional shadows of it, as revealed in several of the other sketches. But had I previously perused "Young Goodman Brown," I should have been at no pains to draw the conclusion, which I came to at a time when I was ignorant that the book contained 10 one such direct and unqualified manifestation of it.

The other piece of the two referred to, is entitled "A Select Party," which, in my first simplicity upon originally taking hold of the book, I fancied must treat of some pumpkin-pie party in old Salem, or some chowder-party on Cape Cod. Whereas, by all the gods of Peedee,¹³ it is the sweetest and sublimest thing that has been written since Spenser wrote. Nay, there is nothing in Spenser that surpasses¹⁴ it, perhaps nothing that equals it. And the test is this: read any canto in "The Faery Queen," and then read "A Select Party" and decide which pleases you the most,—that is, if you are qualified to judge. Do not be frightened at this; for when Spenser was alive, he was thought of very much as Hawthorne is now,—was generally accounted just such a "gentle" harmless man. It may be, that to common eyes, the sublimity of Hawthorne seems lost in his sweetness,—as perhaps in that same "Select Party" of his; for whom he has builded so august a dome of sunset clouds, and served them on richer plate than Belshazzar's¹⁵ when he banqueted his lords in Babylon.

But my chief business now, is to point out a particular page in this piece, having reference to an honored guest, who under the name of "The Master Genius," but in the guise "of a young man of poor attire, with no insignia of rank or acknowledged eminence," is introduced to the man of Fancy, who is the giver of the feast. Now, the page having reference to this "Master Genius," so happily expresses much of what I yesterday wrote, touching the coming of the literary Shiloh of America, that I cannot but be charmed by the coincidence, especially, when it shows such a parity of ideas, at least in this one point, between a man like Hawthorne and a man like me.

And here, let me throw out another concert of mine touching this American Shiloh, or "Master

¹³ Originally "Greece" in manuscript.

¹⁴ Originally "equals," changed to "surpasses," and present sentence completed.

¹⁵ Cf. Daniel v 1-4

Genius," as Hawthorne calls him May it not be, that this commanding mind has not been, is not, and never will be, individually developed in any one man? And would it, indeed, appear so unreasonable to suppose, that this great fulness and overflowing may be, or may be destined to be, shared by a plurality of men of genius? Surely, to take the very greatest example on record, Shakspeare cannot be regarded as in himself the concretion of all the genius of his time, nor as so immeasurably beyond Marlow[e], Webster, 10 Ford, Beaumont, Jonson, that those great men can be said to share none of his power? For one, I conceive that there were dramatists in Elizabeth's day, between whom and Shakspeare the distance was by no means great Let any one, hitherto little acquainted with those neglected old authors, for the first time read them thoroughly, or even read Charles Lamb's Specimens of them, and he will be amazed at the wondrous ability of those Anaks¹⁶ of men, and shocked at this renewed example of the 20 fact, that Fortune has more to do with fame than merit,—though, without merit, lasting fame there can be none

Nevertheless, it would argue too ill of my country were this maxim to hold good concerning Nathaniel Hawthorne, a man, who already, in some few minds, has shed "such a light, as never illuminates the earth save when a great heart burns as the household fire of a grand intellect"

The words are his,—in the "Select Party", and 30 they are a magnificent setting to a coincident sentiment of my own, but ramblingly expressed yesterday, in reference to himself Gainsay it who will, as I now write, I am Posterity speaking by proxy—and after times will make it more than good, when I declare,

that the American, who up to the present day has evinced, in literature, the largest brain with the largest heart, that man is Nathaniel Hawthorne Moreover, that whatever Nathaniel Hawthorne may hereafter write, "The Mosses from an Old Manse" will be ultimately accounted his masterpiece For there is a sure, though a secret sign in some works which proves the culmination of the powers (only the developable ones, however) that produced them But I am by no means desirous of the glory of a prophet I pray Heaven that Hawthorne may yet prove me an impostor in this prediction Especially, as I somehow cling to the strange fancy, that, in all men, hiddenly reside certain wondrous, occult properties—as in some plants and minerals—which by some happy but very rare accident (as bronze was discovered by the melting of the iron and brass at the burning of Corinth) may chance to be called forth here on earth, not entirely waiting for their better discovery in the more congenial, blessed atmosphere of heaven

Once more—for it is hard to be finite upon an infinite subject, and all subjects are infinite By some people this entire scrawl of mine may¹⁷ be esteemed altogether unnecessary, inasmuch "as years ago" (they may say) "we found out the rich and rare stuff in this Hawthorne, whom you now parade forth, as if only *yourself* were the discoverer of this Portuguese diamond in our literature" But even granting all this —and adding to it, the assumption that the books of Hawthorne have sold by the five thousand,—what does that signify? They should be sold by the hundred thousand, and read by the million, and admired by every one who is capable of admiration

1850

[Letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne]¹⁸

Pittsfield, Wednesday morning
[March [?], 1851]

My dear Hawthorne,—

Concerning the young gentleman's shoes, I desire to say that a pair to fit him, of the desired pattern, cannot be had in all Pittsfield,—a fact which sadly impairs that metropolitan pride I formerly took in

the capital of Berkshire Henceforth Pittsfield must hide its head However, if a pair of *bootees* will at all answer, Pittsfield will be very happy to provide them Pray mention all this to Mrs Hawthorne, and command me

"The House of the Seven Gables A Romance By

¹⁷ Originally in MS "dissertation"

¹⁸ Published in Julian Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife* Boston, 1885

¹⁶ In Old Testament the ancestor of a tribe of giants Cf Deuteronomy ix 2 and Joshua xv 14

Nathaniel Hawthorne One vol 16mo, pp 344 "The contents of this book do not belie its rich, clustering, romantic title With great enjoyment we spent almost an hour in each separate gable This book is like a fine old chamber, abundantly, but still judiciously, furnished with precisely that sort of furniture best fitted to furnish it There are rich hangings, wherein are braided scenes from tragedies! There is old china with rare devices, set out on the carved buffet, there are long and indolent lounges to throw yourself upon, 10 there is an admirable sideboard, plentifully stored with good viands, there is a smell as of old wine in the pantry, and finally, in one corner, there is a dark little black-letter volume in golden clasps, entitled "Hawthorne A Problem" It has delighted us, it has piqued a re-perusal, it has robbed us of a day, and made us a present of a whole year of thoughtfulness, it has bred great exhilaration and exultation with the remembrance that the architect of the Gables resides only six miles off, and not three thousand miles away, 20 in England, say We think the book, for pleasantness of running interest, surpasses the other works of the author The curtains are more drawn, the sun comes in more, genialities peep out more Were we to particularize what most struck us in the deeper passages, we would point out the scene where Clifford, for a moment, would fain throw himself forth from the window to join the procession, or the scene where the judge is left seated in his ancestral chair Clifford is full of an awful truth throughout He is concerned 30 in the finest, truest spirit He is no caricature He is Clifford And here we would say that, did circumstances permit, we should like nothing better than to devote an elaborate and careful paper to the full consideration and analysis of the purport and significance of what so strongly characterizes all of this author's writings There is a certain tragic phase of humanity which, in our opinion, was never more powerfully embodied than by Hawthorne We mean the tragedies of human thought in its own unbiassed, 40 native, and profounder workings We think that into no recorded mind has the intense feeling of the usable truth ever entered more deeply than into this man's By usable truth, we mean the apprehension of the absolute condition of present things as they strike the eye of the man who fears them not, though they do their worst to him,—the man who, like Russia or the British Empire, declares himself a sovereign nature

(in himself) amid the powers of heaven, hell, and earth He may perish, but so long as he exists he insists upon treating with all Powers upon an equal basis If any of those other Powers choose to withhold certain secrets, let them, that does not impair any sovereignty in myself, that does not make me tributary And perhaps, after all, there is *no* secret We incline to think that the Problem of the Universe is like the Freemason's mighty secret, so terrible to all children It turns out, at last, to consist in a triangle, a mallet, and an apron,—nothing more! We incline to think that God cannot explain His own secrets, and that He would like a little information upon certain points Himself We mortals astonish Him as much as He us But it is this *Being* of the matter; there lies the knot with which we choke ourselves As soon as you say *Me*, a *God*, a *Nature*, so soon you jump off from your stool and hang from the beam Yes, that word is the hangman Take God out of the dictionary, and you would have Him in the street

There is the grand truth about Nathaniel Hawthorne He says No! in thunder; but the Devil himself cannot make him say yes For all men who say yes, lie, and all men who say *no*,—why, they are in the happy condition of judicious, unincumbered travellers in Europe, they cross the frontiers into Eternity with nothing but a carpet-bag,—that is to say, the Ego Whereas those *yes*-gentry, they travel with heaps of baggage, and, damn them! they will never get through the Custom House What's the reason, Mr Hawthorne, that in the last stages of metaphysics a fellow always falls to *swearing* so? I could rip an hour You see, I began with a little criticism extracted for your benefit from the "Pittsfield Secret Review," and here I have landed in Africa.

Walk down one of these mornings and see me No nonsense; come Remember me to Mrs Hawthorne and the children.

H. Melville.

P S The marriage of Phoebe with the daguerrotypist is a fine stroke, because of his turning out to be a *Maule* If you pass Hepzibah's cent-shop, buy me a Jim Crow (fresh) and send it to me by Ned Higgins ¹⁹

¹⁹ In the novel Ned Higgins, a small boy, repeatedly returns to Miss Hepzibah's "cent shop" for gingerbread Jim Crows

[Letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne]²⁰

[Pittsfield June [?] 1851]

My dear Hawthorne,—

I should have been rumbling down to you in my pine-board chariot a long time ago, were it not that for some weeks past I have been more busy than you can well imagine,—out of doors,—building and patching and tinkering away in all directions. Besides, I had my crops to get in,—corn and potatoes (I hope to show you some famous ones by and by),—and many other things to attend to, all accumulating upon this one particular season. I work myself, and at night my bodily sensations are akin to those I have so often felt before, when a hired man, doing my day's work from sun to sun. But I mean to continue visiting you until you tell me that my visits are both supererogatory and superfluous. With no son of man do I stand upon any etiquette or ceremony, except the Christian ones of charity and honesty. I am told, my fellow-man, that there is an aristocracy of the brain. Some men have boldly advocated and asserted it. Schiller²⁰ seems to have done so, though I don't know much about him. At any rate, it is true that there have been those who, while earnest in behalf of political equality, still accept the intellectual estates. And I can well perceive, I think, how a man of superior mind can, by its intense cultivation, bring himself, as it were, into a certain spontaneous aristocracy of feeling,—exceedingly nice and fastidious,—similar to that which, in an English Howard, conveys a torpedo fish thrill at the slightest contact with a social plebeian. So, when you see or hear of my ruthless democracy on all sides, you may possibly feel a touch of a shrink, or something of that sort. It is but nature to be shy of a mortal who boldly declares that a thief in jail is as honorable a personage as Gen. George Washington. This is ludicrous. But Truth is the silliest thing under the sun. Try to get a living by the Truth—and go to the Soup Societies. Heavens! Let any clergyman try to preach the Truth from its very stronghold, the pulpit, and they would ride him out of his church on his own pulpit bannister. It can hardly be doubted that all Reformers are bottomed upon the truth, more or less, and to the world at

large arc not reformers almost universally laughing-stocks? Why so? Truth is ridiculous to men. Thus easily in my room here do I, conceited and garrulous, reverse the test of my Lord Shaftesbury²¹

It seems an inconsistency to assert unconditional democracy in all things, and yet confess a dislike to all mankind—in the mass. But not so—But it's an endless sermon,—no more of it. I began by saying that the reason I have not been to Lenox is this,—in the evening I feel completely done up, as the phrase is, and incapable of the long jolting to get to your house and back. In a week or so, I go to New York, to bury myself in a third story room, and work and slave on my "Whale" while it is driving through the press. That is the only way I can finish it now,—I am so pulled hither and thither by circumstances. The calm, the coolness, the silent grass growing mood in which a man *ought* always to compose,—that, I fear, can seldom be mine. Dollars damn me, and the malicious Devil is forever grinning in upon me, holding the door ajar. My dear Sir, a presentiment is on me,—I shall at last be worn out and perish, like an old nutmeg grater, grated to pieces by the constant attrition of the wood, that is, the nutmeg. What I feel most moved to write, that is banned,—it will not pay. Yet, altogether, write the *other* way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches. I'm rather sore, perhaps, in this letter, but see my hand!—four blisters on this palm, made by hoes and hammers within the last few days. It is a rainy morning, so I am indoors, and all work suspended. I feel cheerfully disposed, and therefore I write a little blucly. Would the Gen²² were here! If ever, my dear Hawthorne, in the eternal times that are to come, you and I shall sit down in Paradise, in some little shady corner by ourselves, and if we shall by any means be able to smuggle a basket of champagne there (I won't believe in a *l'impudence* *l'ivron*), and if we shall then cross our celestial legs in the celestial grass that is forever tropic, and strike our glasses and our heads together, till both musically ring in concert,—then, O my dear fellow-mortal, how shall we pleasantly dis-

²¹ Lord Shaftesbury's test is ridicule—in *Characteristics* (1711), I, 61.

²² Jinn (correctly jinna) in Mohammedan myth a supernatural being subject to magic control.

²⁰ Published in Julian Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife*, Boston, 1885.

course of all the things manifold which now so distress us,—when all the earth shall be but a reminiscence, yea, its final dissolution an antiquity Then shall songs be composed as when wars are over, humorous, comic songs,—“Oh, when I lived in that queer little hole called the world,” or, “Oh, when I toiled and sweated below,” or, “Oh, when I knocked and was knocked in the fight”—yes, let us look forward to such things Let us swear that, though now we sweat, yet it is because of the dry heat which is indispensable to the nourishment of the vine which is to bear the grapes that are to give us the champagne hereafter

But I was talking about the “Whale” As the fishermen say, “he’s in his flurry” when I left him some three weeks ago I’m going to take him by his jaw, however, before long, and finish him up in some fashion or other What’s the use of elaborating what, in its very essence, is so short-lived as a modern book? Though I wrote the Gospels in this century, I should die in the gutter.—I talk all about myself, and this is selfishness and egotism Granted. But how help it? I am writing to you, I know little about you, but something about myself. So I write about myself.—at least, to you Don’t trouble yourself, though, about writing, and don’t trouble yourself about visiting, and when you *do* visit, don’t trouble yourself about talking. I will do all the writing and visiting and talking myself.—By the way, in the last “Dollar Magazine” I read “The Unpardonable Sin.” He was a sad fellow, that Ethan Brand I have no doubt you are by this time responsible for many a shake and tremor of the tribe of “general readers” It is a frightful poetical creed that the cultivation of the brain eats out the heart. But it’s my *prose* opinion that in most cases, in those men who have fine brains and work them well, the heart extends down to hams And though you smoke them with the fire of tribulation, yet, like veritable hams, the head only gives the richer and the better flavor. I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head! I had rather be a fool with a heart, than Jupiter Olympus with his head. The reason the mass of men fear God, and *at bottom dislike* Him, is because they rather distrust His heart, and fancy Him all brain like a watch. (You perceive I employ a capital initial in the pronoun referring to the Deity; don’t you think there is a slight dash of flunkeyism in that usage?) Another thing. I was in New York for four-and-twenty

hours the other day, and saw a portrait of N.H And I have seen and heard many flattering (in a publisher’s point of view) allusions to the “Seven Gables” And I have seen “Tales,” and “A New Volume”²² announced, by N.H So upon the whole, I say to myself, this N.H is in the ascendant My dear Sir, they begin to patronize. All Fame is patronage. Let me be infamous there is no patronage in *that*. What “reputation” H.M. has is horrible Think of it! To go down to posterity is bad enough, any way, but to go down as a “man who lived among the cannibals!” When I speak of posterity, in reference to myself, I only mean the babies who will probably be born in the moment immediately ensuing upon my giving up the ghost I shall go down to some of them, in all likelihood. “Typee” will be given to them, perhaps, with their gingerbread I have come to regard this matter of Fame as the most transparent of all vanities. I read Solomon more and more, and every time see deeper and deeper and unspeakable meanings in him I did not think of Fame, a year ago, as I do now My development has been all within a few years past I am like one of those seeds taken out of the Egyptian Pyramids, which, after being three thousand years a seed and nothing but a seed, being planted in English soil, it developed itself, grew to greenness, and then fell to mould. So I. Until I was twenty-five, I had no development at all From my twenty-fifth year I date my life. Three weeks have scarcely passed, at any time between then and now, that I have not unfolded within myself. But I feel that I am now come to the inmost leaf of the bulb, and that shortly the flower must fall to the mould. It seems to me now that Solomon was the truest man who ever spoke, and yet that he a little *managed* the truth with a view to popular conservatism, or else there have been many corruptions and interpolations of the text —In reading some of Goethe’s sayings, so worshipped by his votaries, I came across this, “*Live in the all.*” That is to say, your separate identity is but a wretched one,—good, but get out of yourself, spread and expand yourself, and bring to yourself the tinglings of life that are felt in the flowers and the woods, that are felt in the planets Saturn and Venus, and the Fixed Stars. What nonsense! Here is a fellow with a raging toothache. “My dear boy,” Goethe says to him, “you are sorely afflicted with that tooth;

²² *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys.*

but you must *live in the all*, and then you will be happy!" As with all great genius, there is an immense deal of flummery in Goethe, and in proportion to my own contact with him, a monstrous deal of it in me

H Melville

P S "Amen!" saith Hawthorne

N B This "all" feeling, though, there is some truth in You must often have felt it, lying on the grass on

a warm summer's day Your legs seem to send out shoots into the earth Your hair feels like leaves upon your head This is the *all* feeling But what plays the mischief with the truth is that men will insist upon the universal application of a temporary feeling or opinion

P S You must not fail to admire my discretion in paying the postage on this letter

[*Letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne*] ²⁴

Pittsfield, Monday afternoon

[November [?], 1851]

My dear Hawthorne,—

People think that if a man has undergone any hardship, he should have a reward, but for my part, if I have done the hardest possible day's work, and then come to sit down in a corner and eat my supper comfortably—why, then I don't think I deserve any reward for my hard day's work—for am I not now at peace? Is not my supper good? My peace and my supper are my reward, my dear Hawthorne So your joy-giving and exultation-breeding letter is not my reward for my ditcher's work with that book, but is the good goddess's bonus over and above what was stipulated for—for not one man in five cycles, who is wise, will expect appreciative recognition from his fellows, or any one of them Appreciation! Recognition! Is love appreciated? Why, ever since Adam, who has got to the meaning of his great allegory—the world? Then we pygmies must be content to have our paper allegories but ill comprehended I say your appreciation is my glorious gratuity In my proud, humble way,—a shepherd-king,—I was lord of a little vale in the solitary Crimea, but you have now given me the crown of India But on trying it on my head, I found it fell down on my ears, notwithstanding their asinine length—for it's only such ears that sustain such crowns

Your letter was handed me last night on the road going to Mr Morewood's, and I read it there Had I been at home, I would have sat down at once and answered it In me divine magnanimities are spontaneous and instantaneous—catch them while you can The world goes round, and the other side comes up

So now I can't write what I felt But I felt pantheistic then—your heart beat in my ribs and mine in yours, and both in God's A sense of unspeakable security is in me this moment, on account of your having understood the book I have written a wicked book, and feel spotless as the lamb Ineffable socialities are in me I would sit down and dine with you and all the gods in old Rome's Pantheon It is a strange feeling—no hopefulness is in it, no despair Content—that is it, and irresponsibility, but without licentious inclination I speak now of my profoundest sense of being, not of an incidental feeling

Whence come you, Hawthorne? By what right do you drink from my flagon of life? And when I put it to my lips—lo, they are yours and not mine I feel that the Godhead is broken up like the bread at the Supper, and that we are the pieces Hence this infinite fraternity of feeling Now, sympathizing with the paper, my angel turns over another page You did not care a penny for the book But, now and then as you read, you understood the pervading thought that impelled the book—and that you praised Was it not so? You were archangel enough to despise the imperfect body, and embrace the soul Once you hugged the ugly Socrates because you saw the flame in the mouth, and heard the rushing of the demon,—the familiar,—and recognized the sound, for you have heard it in your own solitudes

My dear Hawthorne, the atmospheric skepticisms steal into me now, and make me doubtful of my sanity in writing you thus But, believe me, I am not mad, most noble Festus! ²⁵ But truth is ever incoherent, and when the big hearts strike together, the concussion is a little stunning Farewell Don't write

²⁴ *Memoirs of Hawthorne* by Rose Hawthorne Lathrop Copyright 1897 by Rose Hawthorne Lathrop Reprinted by permission of Rotary Hill Home

²⁵ Probably allusion to Philip James Bailey's *Festus* (1839), or possibly to Festus, the foil of the hero, in Robert Browning's *Paracelsus* (1835)

a word about the book That would be robbing me of my miserly delight I am heartily sorry I ever wrote anything about you—it was paltry ²⁶ Lord, when shall we be done growing? As long as we have anything more to do, we have done nothing So, now, let us add Moby Dick to our blessing, and step from that. Leviathan is not the biggest fish,—I have heard of Krakens

This is a long letter, but you are not at all bound to answer it Possibly, if you do answer it, and direct it to Herman Melville, you will missend it—for the very fingers that now guide this pen are not precisely the same that just took it up and put it on this paper. Lord, when shall we be done changing? Ah! it's a long stage, and no inn in sight, and night coming, and the body cold But with you for a passenger, I am content and can be happy I shall leave the world, I feel, with more satisfaction for having come to know you Knowing you persuades me more than the Bible of our immortality.

What a pity, that, for your plain, bluff letter, you should get such gibberish! Mention me to Mrs Hawthorne and to the children, and so, good-by to you, with my blessing

Herman.

P S I can't stop yet If the world was entirely made up of Magians, I'll tell you what I should do. I should have a paper-mill established at one end of the house, and so have an endless riband of foolscap rolling in upon my desk, and upon that endless riband I should write a thousand—a million—billion thoughts, all under the form of a letter to you The divine magnet is on you, and my magnet responds. Which is the biggest? A foolish question—they are *One*

H.

P P S Don't think that by writing me a letter, you shall always be bored with an immediate reply to it—and so keep both of us delving over a writing-desk eternally No such thing! I sha'n't always answer your letters, and you may do just as you please.

FROM

Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War ²⁷

The Portent

(1859)

Hanging from the beam,
Slowly swaying (such the law),
Gaunt the shadow on your green,
Shenandoah!
The cut is on the crown
(Lo, John Brown),
And the stabs shall heal no more.
Hidden in the cap
Is the anguish none can draw;
So your future veils its face,
Shenandoah!
But the streaming beard is shown
(Weird John Brown),
The meteor of the war.

1866

Misgivings

(1860)

When ocean-clouds over inland hills
Sweep storming in late autumn brown,
And horror the sodden valley fills,
And the spire falls crashing in the town,
I muse upon my country's ills—
The tempest bursting from the waste of Time
On the world's fairest hope linked with man's
foulest crime.

ity ends. To claim for Melville the poetic excellence of Hardy would be unwise, for despite his desire to be a poet, Melville lacked the ear and the gift for the inevitable word which Hardy possessed. His poems, in fact are of interest mainly because Melville the author of more than one prose masterpiece, wrote them. They record stages in his intellectual development.

One of the most interesting groups of Melville's poems is the collection which he published in 1866 in *Battle-Pieces*, 'dedicated to the memory of the Three Hundred Thousand who in the war for the maintenance of the Union fell devotedly under the flag of their fathers' Melville followed the events of these years in the newspapers but he entered vicariously into the suffering of the battlefields and the hardships of the soldiers and sailors. As Thorp has commented, 'To him the glory of the war fell short of its pathos. The sacrifice and slaughter could be endured only if one could be sure that by this laying bare of the "divine foundations" of the gulf a happier world might be built on them.'

²⁶ "Hawthorne and His Mosses," *Literary World*, August 17, 24, 1850.

²⁷ Like Thomas Hardy a few decades later, Melville turned during the latter part of his life from the writing of prose fiction to poetry, and for somewhat the same reasons. (1) disappointment over the public reaction to his "romances" and (2) a desire for expression in the more personal lyric. But there the similar-

Nature's dark side is heeded now—
 (Ah! optimist cheer disheartened frown)—
 A child may read the moody brow
 Of yon black mountain lone

10

With shouts the torrents down the gorges go,
 And storms are formed behind the storm we
 feel
 The hemlock shakes in the rafter, the oak in the
 driving keel

1866

*The Conflict of Convictions*²⁸

(1860-61)

On starry heights
 A bugle wails the long recall,
 Derision stirs the deep abyss,
 Heaven's ominous silence over all
 Return, return, O eager Hope,
 And face man's latter fall
 Events, they make the dreamers quail,
 Satan's old age is strong and hale,
 A disciplined captain, gray in skill,
 And Raphael²⁹ a white enthusiast still,
 Dashed aims, whereat Christ's martyrs pale,
 Shall Mammon's³⁰ slaves fulfill?

10

*(Dismantle the fort,
 Cut down the fleet—
 Battle no more shall be!
 While the fields for fight in æons to come
 Congeal beneath the sea)*

The terrors of truth and dart of death
 To faith alike are vain,
 Though comets, gone a thousand years,
 Return again,
 Patient she stands—she can no more—
 And waits, nor heeds she waxes hoar

20

²⁸ "The gloom hush of the early part of the winter of 1860-61, combined with final disaster to our institutions, affected some minds that believed them to constitute one of the great hopes of mankind such as the eclipse which came over the promise of the first French Revolution affected kindred natures, throwing them for the time into doubts and misgivings universal [Melville's note] Thorpe comments that this poem 'embodies the intuition of the inextricable interweaving of Good and Evil which is central in Melville's thinking. He appears finally to have viewed the struggle between the North and South as an event predestined.'

²⁹ Angel in Jewish literature. In *Paradise Lost* Milton represents him as a winged seraph sent by heaven's high King to converse as 'friend to friend' with Adam.

³⁰ A personification of riches and worldliness. Cf. Matthew vi 24 and Luke xvi 9 ff.

*(At a stony gate,
 A statue of stone,
 Weed overgrown—
 Long 'twill wait!)*

But God His former mind retains,
 Confirms his old decree,
 The generations are inured to pains,
 And strong Necessity
 Surges, and heaps Time's strand with wrecks
 The People spread like a weedy grass,
 The thing they will they bring to pass,
 And prosper to the apoplexy
 The rout it heids around the heart,
 The ghost is yielded in the gloom,
 Kings wag their heads—Now save thyself
 Who wouldst rebuild the world in bloom

30

*(Tide-mark
 And top of the ages' strife,
 Verge were they called the world to come,
 The last advance of life—
 Ha ha, the rust on the Iron Dome!)*³¹

40

Nay, but revere the hid event,
 In the cloud a sword is guided on,
 I mark a twinkling in the tent
 Of Michael³² the warrior one
 Senior wisdom suits not now,
 The light is on the youthful brow

50

*(Ay, in caves the miner see
 His forehead bears, a taper dim,
 Darkness so he feebly braves
 Which foldeth him!)*

But He who rules is old—is old,
 Ah! faith is warm, but heaven with age is cold

*(Ho ho, ho ho,
 The cloistered doubt
 Of olden times
 Is blurted out!)*

60

³¹ 'After the 1851 fire in the Capitol Building in Washington, the Government decided to build a new dome of iron, the old dome having already been dwarfed by extensive additions to the building. The old wood and brick dome was accordingly torn down in 1855 and the new construction begun. The outside was finished by 1863, but it was not until the next year that the dome was painted and the scaffolding removed. Howard Vincent

³² Archangel mentioned in Bible, regarded as leader of host of angels, always spoken of as fighting. John mentions him as fighting at the head of the angels against the dragon and his host.

The Ancient of Days forever is young,
 Forever the scheme of Nature thrives,
 I know a wind in purpose strong—
 It spins *against* the way it drives
 What if the gulfs their slum'd foundations bare?
 So deep must the stones be hurled
 Whereon the throes of ages rear
 The final empire and the happier world

(*The poor old Past,
 The Future's slave,
 She dredged through pain and crime
 To bring about the blissful Prime,
 Then—perished There's a grave!*)

Power unanointed may come—
 Dominion (unsought by the free)
 And the Iron Dome,
 Stronger for stress and strain,
 Fling her huge shadow athwart the main,
 But the Founders' dream shall flee
 Age after age shall be
 As age after age has been,
 (From man's changeless heart their way they win);
 And death be busy with all who strive—
 Death, with silent negative

YEA AND NAY—
 EACH HATH HIS SAY,
 BUT GOD HE KILLS THE MIDDLE WAY
 NONE WAS BY
 WHEN HE SPREAD THE SKY,
 WISDOM IS VAIN, AND PROPHECY.

1866

Apathy and Enthusiasm
 (1860-61)

I

O the clammy cold November,
 And the winter white and dead,
 And the terror dumb with stupor,
 And the sky a sheet of lead.
 And events that came resounding
 With the cry that *All was lost*,
 Like the thunder-cracks of massy ice
 In intensity of frost—
 Bursting one upon another
 Through the horror of the calm.
 The paralysis of arm

In the anguish of the heart;
 And the hollowness and dearth.
 The appealings of the mother
 To brother and to brother
 Not in hatred so to part—
 And the fissure in the hearth
 Growing momentarily more wide
 Then the glances 'tween the Fates,
 And the doubt on every side,
 And the patience under gloom
 In the stoniness that waits
 The finality of doom

20

70

II

So the winter did despairing,
 And the weary weeks of Lent;
 And the ice-bound rivers melted,
 And the tomb of Faith was rent
 O, the rising of the People
 Came with springing of the grass,
 They rebounded from dejection
 After Easter came to pass
 And the young were all elation
 Hearing Sumter's cannon roar
 And they thought how tame the Nation
 In the age that went before.
 And Michael seemed giganical,
 The Arch-fiend but a dwarf;
 And at the towers of Erebus³³
 Our striplings flung the scoff
 But the elders with foreboding
 Mourned the days forever o'er,
 And recalled the forest proverb,
 The Iroquois' old saw:
*Grief to every graybeard
 When young Indians lead the war.*

30

80

90

1866

The March into Virginia

ENDING IN THE FIRST MANASSAS³⁴

(JULY, 1861)

Did all the lets and bars appear
 To every just or larger end,

³³ Greek name for gloomy space through which souls passed to Hades.

³⁴ The Union Army was disastrously defeated at Manassas Plain, in a battle which the North referred to as Bull Run and the South as Manassas. The Union dead numbered 2,984 and the Confederate 1,981. The national Capitol was endangered and the whole North was stunned by the defeat.

10

Whence should come the trust and cheer?
 Youth must its ignorant impulse lend—
 Age finds place in the rear
 All wars are boyish, and are fought by boys,
 The champions and enthusiasts of the state
 Turbid ardors and vain joys
 Not baricly abate—
 Stimulants to the power mature,
 Preparatives of fate

Who hails forecasteth the event?
 What heart but spurns at precedent
 And warnings of the wise,
 Contemned foreclosures of surprise?
 The banners play, the bugles call,
 The air is blue and prodigal
 No berrying party, pleasure wooed,
 No picnic party in the May,
 Ever went less loth than they
 Into that leafy neighborhood
 In Bacchic ³⁵ glee they file toward Fate,
 Moloch's ³⁶ uninitiate,
 Expectancy, and glad surmise
 Of battle's unknown mysteries

All they feel is this 'tis glory,
 A rapture sharp, though transitory,
 Yet lasting in belauded story
 So they gayly go to fight,
 Chatting left and laughing right
 But some who this blithe mood present,
 As on in lightsome files they fare,
 Shall die experienced ere three days be spent—
 Perish, enlightened by the vollied glare,
 Or shame survive, and, like to adamant,
 Thy after shock, Manassas, share

1866

Ball's Bluff ³⁷

A REVERIE
 (OCTOBER, 1861)

One noonday, at my window in the town,
 I saw a sight—saddest that eyes can see—

³⁵ In wild revelry, from celebration of Bacchus, Greek god of wine

³⁶ Idol of Ammonites, worshipped by Canaanites and Semites
 See Milton's characterization of him as god of bloodshed in *Paradise Lost* I, 392 ff

³⁷ A bluff in Virginia, on Potomac River, thirty three miles northwest of Washington, where Federal troops were badly defeated on October 31, 1861

Young soldiers marching lustily
 Unto the wars,
 With fifes, and flags in mottoed pageantry,
 While all the porches, walks, and doors
 Were rich with ladies cheering royally
 They moved like Juny morning on the wave,
 Their hearts were fresh as clover in its prime
 (It was the breezy summer time),
 Life throbbed so strong,
 How should they dream that Death in a rosy clime
 Would come to thin their shining throng?
 Youth feels immortal, like the gods sublime
 Weeks passed, and at my window, leaving bed,
 By night I mused, of easeful sleep bereft,
 On those brave boys (Ah War! thy theft),
 Some marching feet
 Found pause at last by cliffs Potomac cleft,
 Wakeful I mused, while in the street
 Far footfalls died away till none were left

10

10

20

20

1866

Shiloh ³⁸

A REQUIEM
 (APRIL, 1862)

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,
 The swallows fly low
 Over the field in clouded days,
 The forest-field of Shiloh—
 Over the field where April rain
 Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain
 Through the pause of night
 That followed the Sunday fight
 Around the church of Shiloh—
 The church so lone, the log-built one,
 That echoed to many a parting groan
 And natural prayer
 Of dying foemen mingled there—
 Foemen at morn, but friends at eve—
 Fame or country least their care
 (What like a bullet can undecieve!)
 But now they lie low,
 While over them the swallows skim,
 And all is hushed at Shiloh

10

1866

³⁸ In the bloody fighting April 6-7 1862, at Shiloh, near Pittsburg Landing, eighty eight miles east of Memphis, the Confederates won the first shock but were finally forced from the field when Grant received reinforcements. General Grant was criticized for the heavy Union losses

*Malvern Hill*³⁹

(JULY, 1862)

Ye elms that wave on Malvern Hill
 In prime of morn and May,
 Recall ye how McClellan's men
 Here stood at bay?
 While deep within yon forest dim
 Our rigid comrades lay—
 Some with the cartridge in their mouth,
 Others with fixed arms lifted South—
 Invoking so
 The cypress glades? Ah wilds of woe!
 The spires of Richmond, late beheld
 Through rifts in musket-haze,
 Were closed from view in clouds of dust
 On leaf-walled ways,
 Where streamed our wagons in caravan;
 And the Seven Nights and Days
 Of march and fast, retreat and fight,
 Pinched our grimed faces to ghastly plight—
 Does the elm wood
 Recall the haggard beards of blood?
 The battle-smoked flag, with stars eclipsed,
 We followed (it never fell!)—
 In silence husbanded our strength—
 Received their yell;
 Till on this slope we patient turned
 With cannon ordered well;
 Reverse we proved was not defeat;
 But ah, the sod what thousands meet!—
 Does Malvern Wood
 Bethink itself, and muse and brood?

*We elms of Malvern Hill
 Remember every thing;
 But sap the twig will fill.
 Wag the world how it will,
 Leaves must be green in Spring.*
 1866

Stonewall Jackson

(ASCRIBED TO A VIRGINIAN)

One man we claim of wrought renown
 Which not the North shall care to slur,

³⁹ In the "Seven Days' Battles," climaxed by the battle at Malvern Hill, a plateau near the James River, southeast of Richmond, Va., Lee kept McClellan from capturing Richmond.

A Modern lived who sleeps in death,
 Calm as the marble Ancients are
 'Tis he whose life, though a vapor's wreath,
 Was charged with the lightning's burning
 breath—
 Stonewall, stormer of the war.
 But who shall hymn the Roman heart?
 A stoic he, but even more
 The iron will and lion thew
 Were strong to inflict as to endure.
 Who like him could stand, or pursue?
 His fate the fatalist followed through,
 In all his great soul found to do
 Stonewall followed his star.
 He followed his star on the Romney march
 Through the sleet to the wintry war;
 And he followed it on when he bowed the grain—
 The Wind of the Shenandoah,
 At Gaines's Mill in the giants' strain—
 On the fierce forced stride to Manassas-plain,
 Where his sword with thunder was clothed
 again,
 Stonewall followed his star.
 His star he followed athwart the flood
 To Potomac's Northern shore,
 When midway wading, his host of braves
 "*My Maryland!*" loud did roar—
 To red Antietam's field of graves,
 Through mountain-passes, woods and waves,
 They followed their pagod with hymns and
 glaves,
 For Stonewall followed a star
 Back it led him to Marye's slope,
 Where the shock and the fame he bore;
 And to green Moss-Neck it guided him—
 Brief respite from throes of war:
 To the laurel glade by the Wilderness grim,
 Through climaxed victory naught shall dim,
 Even unto death it piloted him—
 Stonewall followed his star.
 Its lead he followed in gentle ways
 Which never the valiant mar;
 A cap we sent him, bestarred, to replace
 The sun-scorched helm of war:
 A fillet he made of the shining lace
 Childhood's laughing brow to grace—
 Not his was a goldsmith's star.

O, much of doubt in after days
 Shall cling, as now, to the war,
 Of the right and the wrong they'll still debate,
 Puzzled by Stonewall's star
 "Fortune went with the North clate,"
 "Ay, but the South had Stonewall's weight,
 And he fell in the South's great war"
 1866

The Surrender at Appomattox

(APRIL, 1865)

As billows upon billows roll,
 On victory victory breaks,
 Ere yet seven days from Richmond's fall
 And crowning triumph wakes
 The loud joy gun, whose thunders run
 By sea-shore, streams and lakes
 The hope and great event agree
 In the sword that Grant received from Lee

The warring eagles fold the wing,
 But not in Caesar's sway,
 Not Rome o'ercome by Roman arms we sing
 As on Pharsalia's day,
 But Treason thrown, though giant grown,
 And Freedom's larger play
 All human tribes glad token see
 In the close of the wars of Giant and Lee
 1866

The Martyr

INDICATIVE OF THE PASSION OF THE PEOPLE
 ON THE 15TH DAY OF APRIL, 1865

Good Friday was the day
 Of the prodigy and crime,
 When they killed him in his pity,
 When they killed him in his prime
 Of clemency and calm—
 When with yearning he was filled
 To redeem the evil-willed,
 And, though conqueror, be kind,
 But they killed him in his kindness,
 In their madness and their blindness,
 And they killed him from behind
 There is sobbing of the strong,
 And a pall upon the land,
 But the people in their weeping
 Bare the iron hand,

Beware the People weeping
 When they bare the iron hand

He lieth in his blood—
 The father in his face,
 They have killed him, the Forgiver—
 The Avenger takes his place,
 The Avenger wisely stern,
 Who in righteousness shall do
 What the heavens call him to,
 And the parricides remand,
 For they killed him in his kindness,
 In their madness and their blindness,
 And his blood is on their hand

There is sobbing of the strong,
 And a pall upon the land,
 But the People in their weeping
 Bare the iron hand
 Beware the People weeping
 When they bare the iron hand

Aurora-Borealis

COMMEMORATIVE OF THE DISSOLUTION
 OF ARMIES AT THE PEACE (MAY, 1865)

What power disbands the Northern Lights
 After their steely play?
 The watcher feels a creeping awe
 Of Nature's sway,
 As when appearing,
 He marked their flashed uprearing
 In the cold gloom—
 Retreatings and advancings,
 (Like dallings of doom),
 Transitions and enhancings,
 And bloody ray

The phantom host has faded quite,
 Splendor and Terror gone—
 Portent or promise—and gives way
 To pale, meek Dawn,
 The coming, going,
 Alike in wonder showing—
 Alike the God,
 Decreeing and commanding
 The million blades that glowed,
 The muster and disbanding—
 Midnight and Morn

*Billy Budd, Foretopman*WHAT BEFELL HIM IN THE YEAR OF THE GREAT MUTINY⁴⁰

DEDICATED TO
JACK CHASE
ENGLISHMAN

WHEREVER THAT GREAT HEART MAY NOW BE
HERE ON EARTH OR HARBOURED IN PARA-
DISE CAPTAIN OF THE MAINTOP IN THE YEAR
1843 IN THE U.S. FRIGATE "UNITED STATES"

Preface

The year 1797, the year of this narrative, belongs to a period which, as every thinker now feels, involved a crisis for Christendom not exceeded in its undetermined momentousness at the time by any other era whereof there is record. The opening proposition made by the Spirit of that Age⁴¹ involved rectification of the Old World's hereditary wrongs. In France, to some extent, this was bloodily effected. But what then? Straightway the Revolution itself became a wrongdoer, one more oppressive than the kings. Under Napoleon it enthroned upstart kings,²⁰

⁴⁰ This story was found among Melville's manuscripts after his death. Melville noted on his manuscript that he began the story Friday, November 16, 1888, began revision on March 2, 1889, and finished the revision April 19, 1892. Raymond Weaver found the manuscript and published it in England in 1924. It was not copyrighted in America. Mrs. Eleanor Melville Metcalf, Melville's granddaughter, generously permits the reprinting of the story here.

Although Melville used in the setting of *Billy Budd* the great mutiny in the British Navy in 1797, the story may have been suggested to him by the hanging of a seaman charged with mutiny on an American brig in 1842. The earlier date suited better the author's symbolical purposes, coming soon after the French Revolution, which spread the doctrines of the "rights of man." Some critics think *Billy Budd*, with its greater unity and dramatic concentration, better than Melville's usually acknowledged masterpiece, *Moby Dick*. Certainly it is more readable and comprehensible, and not lacking in terrific irony and implied allegory.

Much of the story appears to have been based on actual fact. See Charles R. Anderson, "The Genesis of *Billy Budd*," *American Literature*, XII, 329-46 (October, 1940), and Newton Arvin, "A Note on the Background of *Billy Budd*," *American Literature*, XX, 51-55 (March, 1948).

Professor F. Barron Freeman has published (Harvard University Press, 1948) a new text based on a rereading of the manuscripts in the Harvard Library. The text published here (edited from previously published versions) differs from Professor Freeman's in minor details of punctuation, chapter division, and occasionally of wording, but not in essential meaning. Professor Freeman's long Introduction is especially valuable for background.

⁴¹ Crossed out was one hailed by the noblest men of it. Even the dry under of a Wordsworth took fire [Weaver's note.]

and initiated that prolonged agony of continual war whose final throes was Waterloo. During those years not the wisest could have foreseen that the outcome of all would be what to some thinkers apparently it has since turned out to be—a political advance along nearly the whole line for Europeans.

Now, as elsewhere hinted, it was something caught from the Revolutionary Spirit that at Spithead emboldened the man-of-war's men to rise against real abuses, long-standing ones, and afterwards at the Nile to make inordinate and aggressive demands—successful resistance to which was confirmed only when the ringleaders were hung for an admonitory spectacle to the anchored fleet. Yet in a way analogous to the operation of the Revolution at large—the Great Mutiny, though by Englishmen naturally deemed monstrous at the time, doubtless gave the first latent prompting to most important reforms in the British navy.

CHAPTER I

(An inside narrative)

In the time before steamships, or then more frequently than now, a stroller along the docks of any considerable seaport would occasionally have his attention arrested by a group of bronzed marines, man-of-war's men or merchant-sailors in holiday attire ashore on liberty. In certain instances they would flank, or, like a bodyguard, quite surround some superior figure of their own class, moving along with them like Aldebaran among the lesser lights of his constellation. That signal object was the "Handsome Sailor" of the less prosaic time, alike of the military and merchant navies. With no perceptible trace of the vainglorious about him, rather with the off-hand unaffectedness of natural regality, he seemed to accept the spontaneous homage of his shipmates. A somewhat remarkable instance recurs to me. In Liverpool, now half a century ago, I saw under the shadow of the great dingy street-wall of Prince's Dock (an obstruction long since removed) a common sailor, so intensely black that he must needs have been a native African of the unadulterated blood of Ham. A symmetric figure, much above the

average height The two ends of a gay silk handkerchief thrown loose about the neck danced upon the displayed ebony of his chest, in his ears were big hoops of gold, and a Scotch Highland bonnet with a tartan band set off his shapely head

It was a hot noon in July, and his face, lustrous with perspiration beamed with barbaric good humour In jovial sallies right and left, his white teeth flashing into view, he rollicked along, the centre of a company of his shipmates These were made up of 10 such an assortment of tribes and complexions as would have well fitted them to be marched up by Anacharsis Cloots before the bar of the first French Assembly as Representatives of the Human Race At each spontaneous tribute rendered by the wayfarers to this black pagod of a fellow—the tribute of a pause and stare, and less frequently an exclamation—the motley retinue showed that they took that sort of pride in the evoker of it which the Assyrian priests doubtless showed for their grand sculptured Bull 20 when the faithful prostrated themselves To return—

If in some cases a bit of a nautical Murat in setting forth his person ashore, the Handsome Sailor of the period in question evinced nothing of the dandified Billy be Damn—an amusing character all but extinct now, but occasionally to be encountered and in a form yet more amusing than the original, at the tiller of the boats on the tempestuous Erie Canal or, more likely, vapouring in the grogeries along the tow path Invariably a proficient in his 30 perilous calling, he was also more or less of a mighty boxer or wrestler It was strength and beauty Tales of his prowess were recited Ashore he was the champion, afloat the spokesman, on every suitable occasion always foremost Close-reefing topsails in a gale, there he was—astride the weather yard-arm end, foot in "stirrups," both hands tugging at the "ear ring" as at a bridle, in very much the attitude of the young Alexander curbing the fiery Bucephalus 42 A superb figure, tossed up as by the horns of Taurus against 40 the thunderous sky, cheerily hallooing to the strenuous file along the spar

The moral nature was seldom out of keeping with the physical make Indeed, except as toned by the former, the comeliness and power, always attractive in masculine conjunction, hardly could have drawn the sort of homage the Handsome Sailor, in some examples, received from his less gifted associates

⁴² The favorite horse of Alexander the Great (356-323 B C)

Such a cynosure, at least in aspect, and something such too in nature, though with important variations made apparent as the story proceeds, was well-known Billy Budd, or Baby Budd—as more familiarly, under circumstances hereafter to be given, he at last came to be called—aged twenty one, a foretopman of the fleet towards the close of the last decade of the eighteenth century It was not very long prior to the time of the narration that follows, that he had entered the King's Service, having been impressed on the Narrow Seas from a homeward bound English merchantman into a seventy four outward-bound, H M S *Indomitable*, which ship, as was not unusual in those hurried days, had been obliged to put to sea short of her proper complement of men Plump upon Billy at first sight in the gangway the boarding officer, Lieutenant Ratchiffe, pounced, even before the merchantman's crew formally was mustered on the quarter deck for his deliberate inspection And him only he elected For whether it was because the other men when ranged before him showed to ill advantage after Billy, or whether he had some scruples in view of the merchantman being rather short-handed, however it might be, the officer contented himself with his first spontaneous choice To the surprise of the ship's company, though much to the Lieutenant's satisfaction, Billy made no demur But indeed any demur would have been as idle as the protest of a goldfinch popped into a cage Noting this uncomplaining acquiescence, all but cheerful one might say, the shipmates turned a surprised glance of silent reproach at the sailor The shipmaster was one of those worthy mortals found in every vocation,—even the humbler ones,—the sort of person whom everybody agrees in calling "a respectable man" And—nor so strange to report as it may appear to be—though a ploughman of the troubled waters, life-long contending with the intractable elements, there was nothing this honest soul at heart loved better than simple peace and quiet For the rest, he was fifty or thereabouts, a little inclined to corpulence, a prepossessing face, unwhiskered, and of an agreeable colour—a rather full face, humanely intelligent in expression On a fair day with a fair wind and all going well, a certain musical chime in his voice seemed to be the veritable unobstructed outcome of the innermost man He had much prudence, much conscientiousness, and there were occasions when these virtues were the cause of

overmuch disquietude in him. On a passage, so long as his craft was in any proximity to land, there was no sleep for Captain Graveling. He took to heart those serious responsibilities not so heavily borne by some shipmasters.

Now, while Billy Budd was down in the forecabin, getting his kit together, the *Indomitable's* Lieutenant—burly and bluff, nowise disconcerted by Captain Graveling's omitting to proffer the customary hospitalities on an occasion so unwelcome to him, an omission simply caused by preoccupation of thought—unceremoniously invited himself into the cabin, and also to a flask from the spirit locker, a receptacle which his experienced eye instantly discovered. In fact, he was one of those sea-dogs in whom all the hardship and peril of naval life in the great prolonged wars of his time never impaired the natural instinct for sensuous enjoyment. His duty he always faithfully did; but duty is sometimes a dry obligation, and he was for irrigating its aridity whensoever possible with a fertilizing decoction of strong waters. For the cabin's proprietor there was nothing left but to play the part of the enforced host with whatever grace and alacrity were practicable. As necessary adjuncts to the flask he silently placed tumbler and water-jug before the irrepressible guest. But excusing himself from partaking just then, he dismally watched the unembarrassed officer deliberately diluting his grog a little, then tossing it off in three swallows, pushing the empty tumbler away, yet not so far as to be beyond easy reach, at the same time settling himself in his seat and smacking his lips with high satisfaction, looking straight at the host.

These proceedings over, the Master broke the silence; and there lurked a rueful reproach in the tone of his voice. "Lieutenant, you're going to take my best man from me, the jewel of 'em."

"Yes, I know," rejoined the other, immediately drawing back the tumbler preliminary to a replenishing; "Yes, I know. Sorry."

"Beg pardon, but you don't understand, Lieutenant. See here now. Before I shipped that young fellow, my forecabin was a rat-pit of quarrels. It was black times, I tell you, aboard the '*Rights*' here. I was worried to that degree my pipe had no comfort for me. But Billy came; and it was like a Catholic priest striking peace in an Irish shindy. Not that he preached to them or said or did anything in particular; but a virtue went out of him, sugaring the

sour ones. They took to him like hornets to treacle, all but the bluffer of the gang, the big shaggy chap with the fire-red whiskers. He, indeed, out of envy, perhaps of the newcomer, and thinking such a 'sweet and pleasant fellow,' as he mockingly designated him to the others, could hardly have the spirit of a gamecock, must needs bestir himself in trying to get up an ugly row with him. Billy forbore with him and reasoned with him in a pleasant way—he is something like myself, Lieutenant, to whom ought like a quarrel is hateful—but nothing served. So, in the second dog-watch one day the Red-Whiskers, in the presence of the others, under pretence of showing Billy just whence a sirloin steak was cut—for the fellow had once been a butcher—insultingly gave him a dig under the ribs. Quick as lightning Billy let fly his arm. I dare say he never meant to do quite as much as he did, but anyhow he gave the burly fool a terrible drubbing. It took about half a minute, I should think. And, Lord bless you, the lubber was astonished at the celerity. And will you believe it, Lieutenant, the Red-Whiskers now really loves Billy—loves him, or is the biggest hypocrite that ever I heard of. But they all love him. Some of 'em do his washing, darn old trousers for him; the carpenter is at odd times making a pretty little chest of drawers for him. Anybody will do anything for Billy Budd; and it's the happy family here. Now, Lieutenant, if that young fellow goes—I know how it will be aboard the '*Rights*.' Not again very soon shall I, coming up from dinner, lean over the capstan smoking a quiet pipe—no, not very soon again, I think. Ay, Lieutenant, you are going to take away the jewel of 'em, you are going to take away my peacemaker." And with that the good soul had really some ado in checking a rising sob.

"Well," said the Lieutenant, who had listened with amused interest to all this, and now waxing merry with his tittle. "Well, blessed are the peacemakers, especially the fighting peacemakers! And such are the seventy-four beauties, some of which you see poking their noses out of the port-holes of yonder war-ship lying-to there for me," pointing through the cabin window at the *Indomitable*. "But courage! don't look so down-hearted, man. Why, I pledge you in advance the royal approbation. Rest assured that His Majesty will be delighted to know that in a time when his hard-tack is not sought for by sailors with such avidity as

should be, a time also when some shipmasters privily resent the borrowing from them of a tar or two for the service, His Majesty, I say, will be delighted to learn that *one* shipmaster, at least, cheerfully surrenders to the King the flower of his flock, a sailor who with equal loyalty makes no dissent—But where's my beauty? Ah," looking through the cabin's open door "Here he comes, and, by Jove—lugging along his chest—Apollo with his portmanteau! My man," stepping out to him, "you can't take that big 10 box on board a war ship The boxes there are mostly shot-boxes Put up your duds in a bag, lad Boot and saddle for the cavalryman, bag and hammock for the man-of-war's man"

The transfer from chest to bag was made And, after seeing his man into the cutter, and then following him down the Lieutenant pushed off from the *Rights-of-Man* That was the merchantship's name, though by her master and crew abbreviated in sailor fashion into the "*Rights*" The hard-headed Dundee 20 owner was a staunch admirer of Thomas Paine whose book in rejoinder to Burke's arraignment of the French Revolution had then been published for some time and had gone everywhere In christening his vessel after the title of Paine's volume, the man of Dundee was something like his contemporary shipowner, Stephen Guard of Philadelphia, whose sympathies alike with his native land and its liberal philosophies he evinced by naming his ships after Voltaire, Diderot, and so forth

But now, when the boat swept under the merchantman's stern, and officer and oarsmen were noting,—some bitterly and others with a grin,—the name emblazoned there, just then it was that the new recruit jumped up from the bow where the coxswain had directed him to sit, and waving his hat to his silent shipmates sorrowfully looking over at him from the taffrail, and bade the lads a general good-bye Then making a salutation as to the ship herself, "And good-bye to you too, old *Rights-of-Man*!"

"Down, Sir," roared the Lieutenant, instantly assuming all the rigour of his rank, though with difficulty repressing a smile

To be sure, Billy's action was a terrible breach of naval decorum But in that decorum he had never been instructed, in consideration of which the Lieutenant would hardly have been so energetic in reproof but for the concluding farewell to the ship This he rather took as meant to convey a covert sally

on the new recruit's part—a sly slur at impressment in general, and that of himself in especial And yet, more likely, if satire it was in effect, it was hardly so by intention, for Billy (though happily endowed with the gaiety of high health, youth and a free heart) was vet by no means of a satirical turn The will to it and the sinister dexterity were alike wanting To deal in double meaning and insinuations of any sort was quite foreign to his nature

As to his enforced enlistment, that he seemed to take pretty much as he was wont to take any vicissitude of weather Like the animals, though no philosopher, he was, without knowing it, practically a fatalist And, it may be, that he rather liked this adventurous turn in his affairs which promised an opening into novel scenes and martial excitements

Aboard the *Indomitable* our merchant sailor was forthwith rated as an able seaman, and assigned to the starboard watch of the foretop He was soon at home in the service, not at all disliked for his unpretentious good looks and a sort of genial happy-go-lucky air No merrier man in his mess, in marked contrast to certain other individuals included like himself among the impressed portions of the ship's company, for these when not actively employed were sometimes—and more particularly in the last dog watch, when the drawing near of twilight induced every—apt to fall into a saddy mood which in 30 some partook of sullenness But they were not so young as our foretopman, and no few of them must have known a hearth of some sort, others may have had wives and children left, too probably, in uncertain circumstances, and hardly any but must have acknowledged kith and kin, while for Billy, as will shortly be seen, his entire family was practically invested in himself

CHAPTER II

Though our new-made foretopman was well received in the top and on the gun-decks, hardly here 40 was he that cynosure he had previously been among those minor ships' companies of the merchant marine, with which companies only had he hitherto consorted

He was young, and despite his all but fully developed frame, in aspect looked even younger than he really was This was owing to a lingering adolescent expression in the as yet smooth face, all but feminine in purity of natural complexion, but where, thanks

to his seagoing, the lily was quite suppressed and the rose had some ado visibly to flush through the tan.

To one essentially such a novice in the complexities of factitious life, the abrupt transition from his former and simpler sphere to the ampler and more knowing world of a great war-ship—this might well have abashed him had there been any conceit or vanity in his composition. Among her miscellaneous multitude, the *Indomitable* mustered several individuals who, however inferior in grade, were of no common natural stamp, sailors more signally susceptible of that air which continuous martial discipline and repeated presence in battle can in some degree impart even to the average man. As the "Handsome Sailor" Billy Budd's position aboard the seventy-four was something analogous to that of a rustic beauty transplanted from the provinces and brought into competition with the high-born dames of the court. But this change of circumstances he scarce noted. As little did he observe that something about him provoked an ambiguous smile in one or two harder faces among the blue-jackets. Nor less unaware was he of the peculiar favourable effect his person and demeanour had upon the more intelligent gentlemen of the quarter-deck. Nor could this well have been otherwise. Cast in a mould peculiar to the finest physical examples of those Englishmen in whom the Saxon strain would seem not at all to partake of any Norman or other admixture, he showed in face that humane look of reposeful good nature which the Greek sculptor in some instances gave to his heroic strong man, Hercules. But this again was subtly modified by another and pervasive quality. The ear, small and shapely, the arch of the foot, the curve in mouth and nostril, even the indurated hand dyed to the orange-tawny of the toucan's bill, a hand telling of the halyards and tar-buckets, but, above all, something in the mobile expression, and every chance attitude and movement, something suggestive of a mother eminently favoured by Love and the Graces; all this strangely indicated a lineage in direct contradiction to his lot. The mysteriousness here became less mysterious through a matter of fact elicited when Billy at the capstan was being formally mustered into the service. Asked by the officer, a small, brisk little gentleman as it chanced, among other questions, his place of birth, he replied, "Please, Sir, I don't know."

"Don't know where you were born? Who was your father?"

"God knows, Sir."

Struck by the straightforward simplicity of these replies, the officer next asked, "Do you know anything about your beginning?"

"No, Sir. But I have heard that I was found in a pretty silk-lined basket hanging one morning from the knocker of a good man's door in Bristol."

"*'Found,'* say you? Well," throwing back his head and looking up and down the new recruit: "well it turns out to have been a pretty good find. Hope they'll find some more like you, my man, the fleet sadly needs them."

Yes, Billy Budd was a foundling, a presumable by-blow, and, evidently, no ignoble one. Noble descent was as evident in him as in a blood horse.

For the rest, with little or no sharpness of faculty or any trace of the wisdom of the serpent, nor yet quite a dove, he possessed that kind and degree of intelligence going along with the unconventional rectitude of a sound human creature, one to whom not as yet had been proffered the questionable apple of knowledge. He was illiterate; he could not read, but he could sing, and like the illiterate nightingale was sometimes the composer of his own song.

Of self-consciousness he seemed to have little or none, or about as much as we may reasonably impute to a dog of St. Bernard's breed.

Habitually being with the elements, and knowing little more of the land than as a beach, or, rather, that portion of the terraqueous globe, providentially set apart for dance-houses, doxies and tapsters, in short what sailors call a "fiddlers' green," his simple nature remained unsophisticated by those moral obliquities which are not in every case incomparable with that manufacturable thing known as respectability. But are sailors, frequenters of fiddlers' greens without vices? No; but less often than with landmen do their vices, so called, partake of crookedness of heart, seeming less to proceed from viciousness than from exuberance of vitality after long restraint, frank manifestations in accordance with natural law. By his original constitution aided by the coöperating influences of his lot, Billy in many respects was little more than a sort of upright barbarian, much such perhaps as Adam presumably might have been ere the urbane Serpent wriggled himself into his company.

And here be it submitted that, apparently going to corroborate the doctrine of man's fall, a doctrine

now popularly ignored, it is observable that where certain virtues pristine and unadulterate peculiarly characterize anybody in the external uniform of civilization, they will upon scrutiny seem not to be derived from custom or convention but rather to be out of keeping with these, as if indeed exceptionally transmitted from a period prior to Cain's City and civilized man. The character marked by such qualities has to an unvitiated taste an untampered with flavour like that of berries, while the man thoroughly civilized, even in a fair specimen of the breed, has to the same moral palate a questionable smack as of a compounded wine. To any stray inheritor of these primitive qualities found, like Caspar Hauser, wandering dazed in any Christian capital of our time, the poet's famous invocation, near two thousand years ago, of the good rustic out of his latitude in the Rome of the Cæsars, still appropriately holds —

Faithful in word and thought,
What has Theoc, Fabian, to the city brought

Though our Handsome Sailor had as much of masculine beauty as one can expect anywhere to see, nevertheless, like the beautiful woman in one of Hawthorne's minor tales, there was just one thing amiss in him. No visible blemish, indeed, as with the lady, no, but an occasional liability to a vocal defect. Though in the hour of elemental uproar or peril, he was everything that a sailor should be, yet under sudden provocation of strong heart feeling his voice, otherwise singularly musical, as if expressive of the harmony within, was apt to develop an organic hesitancy,—in fact more or less of a stutter or even worse. In this particular Billy was a striking instance that the arch interloper, the envious marplot of Eden, still has more or less to do with every human consignment to this planet of earth. In every case, one way or another, he is sure to slip in his little card, as much as to remind us—I too have a hand here.

The avowal of such an imperfection in the Handsome Sailor should be evidence not alone that he is not presented as a conventional hero, but also that the story in which he is the main figure is no romance

CHAPTER III

At the time of Billy Budd's arbitrary enlistment into the *Indomitable* that ship was on her way to join the Mediterranean fleet. No long time elapsed before the junction was effected. As one of that fleet the

seventy-four participated in its movements though at times on account of her superior sailing qualities, in the absence of frigates, despatched on separate duty as a scout—and at times on less temporary service. But with all this the story has little concernment, restricted as it is to the inner life of one particular ship and the career of an individual sailor.

It was the summer of 1797. In April of that year had occurred the commotion of Spithead followed in May by a second and yet more serious outbreak in the fleet at the Nore. The latter is known, and without exaggeration in the epithet, as the Great Mutiny. It was indeed a demonstration more menacing to England than the contemporary manifestoes and conquering and proselyting armies of the French Directory.

To the Empire, the Nore Mutiny was what a strike in the fire-brigade would be to London threatened by general arson. In a crisis when the Kingdom might well have anticipated the famous signal that some years later published along the naval line of battle what it was that upon occasion England expected of Englishmen, *that* was the time when at the mastheads of the three-deckers and seventy-fours moored in her own roadstead—a fleet, the right arm of a Power then all but the sole free conservative one of the Old World, the blue-jackets, to be numbered by thousands, ran up with hurrahs the British colours with the union and cross wiped out, by that cancellation transmuting the flag of founded law and freedom defined into the enemy's red meteor of unbridled and unbounded revolt. Reasonable discontent growing out of practical grievances in the fleet had been ignited into irrational combustion as by live cinders blown across the Channel from France in flames.

The event converted into irony for a time those spirited strains of Dibdin—as a song writer no mean auxiliary to the English Government—at this European conjuncture, strains celebrating, among other things, the patriotic devotion of the British tar.

And as for my life, 'tis the King's!

Such an episode in the Island's grand naval story her naval historians naturally abridge, one of them (G. P. R. James)⁴³ candidly acknowledging that fam-

⁴³ Melville confused G. P. R. James, a popular novelist, with William James, who wrote the work Melville had in mind *The Naval History of Great Britain* six vols., London, 1860.

would he pass it over did not "impartiality forbid fastidiousness" And yet his mention is less a narration than a reference, having to do hardly at all with details Nor are these readily to be found in libraries Like some other events in every age befalling states everywhere, including America, the Great Mutiny was of such character that national pride along with views of policy would fain shade it off into the historical background Such events cannot be ignored, but there is a considerate way of historically treating 10 them If a well-constituted individual refrains from blazoning aught amiss or calamitous in his family, a nation in the like circumstance may without reproach be equally discreet

Though after parleyings between Government and the ringleaders, and concessions by the former as to some glaring abuses, the first uprising—that at Spithead—with difficulty was put down, or matters for a time pacified, yet at the Nore the unforeseen renewal of insurrection on a yet larger scale, and emphasized 20 in the conferences that ensued by demands deemed by the authorities not only inadmissible but aggressively insolent, indicated, if the red flag did not sufficiently do so, what was the spirit animating the men. Final suppression, however, there was; but only made possible perhaps by the unswerving loyalty of the marine corps, and a voluntary resumption of loyalty among influential sections of the crews. To some extent the Nore Mutiny may be regarded as analogous to the distemp'ring *irruption* of contagious 30 fever in a frame constitutionally sound, and which anon throws it off.

At all events, of these thousands of mutineers were some of the tars who not so very long afterwards—whether wholly prompted thereto by patriotism, or pugnacious instinct, or by both,—helped to win a coronet for Nelson at the Nile, and the naval crown of crowns for him at Trafalgar To the mutineers those battles, and especially Trafalgar, were a plenary absolution; and a grand one; for all that goes 40 to make up scenic naval display is heroic magnificence in arms. Those battles, especially Trafalgar, stand unmatched in human annals.

CHAPTER IV

Concerning "*The greatest sailor since the world began.*"

TENNYSON

In this matter of writing, resolve as one may to keep to the main road, some bypaths have an entice-

ment not readily to be withstood. Beckoned by the genius of Nelson, I am going to err in such a by-path If the reader will keep me company I shall be glad. At the least we can promise ourselves that pleasure which is wickedly said to be in sinning, for a literary sin the divergence will be.

Very likely it is no new remark that the inventions of our time have at last brought about a change in sea warfare in degree corresponding to the revolution in all warfare effected by the original introduction from China into Europe of gunpowder The first European firearm, a clumsy contrivance, was, as is well known, scouted by no few of the knights as a base implement, good enough peradventure for weavers too craven to stand up crossing steel with steel in frank fight But as ashore knightly valour, though shorn of its blazonry, did not cease with the knights, neither on the seas, though nowadays in encounters there a certain kind of displayed gal- 10 lantry be fallen out of date as hardly applicable under changed circumstances, did the nobler qualities of such naval magnates as Don John of Austria, Dona, Van Tromp, Jean Bart, the long line of British admirals and the American Decatur of 1812 become obsolete with their wooden walls.

Nevertheless, to anybody who can hold the Present at its worth without being inappreciative of the Past, it may be forgiven, if to such an one the solitary old hulk at Portsmouth, Nelson's *Victory*, seems to float 20 there, not alone as the decaying monument of a fame incorruptible, but also as a poetic reproach, softened by its picturesqueness, to the *Monitors* and yet mightier hulls of the European ironsides. And this not altogether because such craft are unsightly, unavoidably lacking the symmetry and grand lines of the old battleships, but equally for other reasons

There are some, perhaps, who while not altogether inaccessible to that poetic reproach just alluded to, may yet on behalf of the new order be disposed to parry it, and this to the extent of iconoclasm, if need be. For example, prompted by the sight of the star inserted in the *Victory's* deck designing the spot where the Great Sailor fell, these martial utilitarians may suggest considerations implying that Nelson's ornate publication of his person in battle was not only unnecessary, but not military, nay, savoured of foolhardiness and vanity. They may add, too, that at Trafalgar it was in effect nothing less than a chal- 30 lenge to death; and death came; and that but for his

bravado the victorious admiral might possibly have survived the battle, and so instead of having his sagacious dying injunction overruled by his immediate successor in command, he himself when the contest was decided might have brought his shattered fleet to anchor, a proceeding which might have averted the deplorable loss of life by shipwreck in the elemental tempest that followed the martial one.

Well, should we set aside the more disputable point whether for various reasons it was possible to anchor the fleet, then plausibly enough the Benthamites of war may urge the above.

But the *might have been* is but boggy ground to build on. And certainly in foresight as to the larger issue of an encounter, and anxious preparation for it—buoying the deadly way and mapping it out, as at Copenhagen—few commanders have been so painstakingly circumspect as this reckless declaimer of his person in fight.

Personal prudence, even when dictated by quite other than selfish considerations is surely no special virtue in a military man, while an excessive love of glory, energizing to the uttermost the honest heart-felt sense of duty, is the first. If the name of *Wellington* is not so much a trumpet to the blood as the simpler name *Nelson* the reason for this may perhaps be inferred from the above. Alfred in his funeral ode on the victor of Waterloo ventures not to call him the greatest soldier of all time, though in the same ode he invokes Nelson as "the greatest sailor since the world began."

At Trafalgar, Nelson, on the brink of opening the fight, sat down and wrote his last brief will and testament. If under the presentiment of the most magnificent of all victories to be crowned by his own glorious death, a sort of priestly motive led him to dress his person in the jewelled vouchers of his own shining deeds, if thus to have adorned himself for the altar and the sacrifice were indeed vainglory, then affectation and fustian is each truly heroic line in the great epics and dramas, since in such lines the poet but embodies in verse those exaltations of sentiment that a nature like Nelson, the opportunity being given, vitalizes into acts.

CHAPTER V

The outbreak at the North was put down. But not every grievance was redressed. If the contractors, for example, were no longer permitted to ply some prac-

tices peculiar to their tribe everywhere, such as providing shoddy cloth, rations not sound, or false in the measure, not the less impressment, for one thing, went on. By custom sanctioned for centuries, and judicially maintained by a Lord Chancellor as late as Mansfield, that mode of manning the fleet, a mode now fallen into a sort of abeyance but never formally renounced, it was not practicable to give up in those years. Its abrogation would have crippled the indispensable fleet, one wholly under canvas, no steam-power, its innumerable sails and thousands of cannon, everything, in short, worked by muscle alone, a fleet the more insatiate in demand for men, because then multiplying its ships of all grades against contingencies present and to come of the convulsed Continent.

Discontent foreran the Two Mutinies, and more or less it lurkily survived them. Hence it was not unreasonable to apprehend some return of trouble, sporadic or general. One instance of such apprehensions. In the same year with this story, Nelson, then Vice-Admiral Sir Horatio, being with the fleet off the Spanish coast, was directed by the Admiral in command to shift his pennant from the *Captain* to the *Theseus*, and for this reason—that the latter ship having newly arrived in the station from home where it had taken part in the Great Mutiny, danger was apprehended from the temper of the men, and it was thought that an officer like Nelson was the one, not indeed to terrorize the crew into base subjection, but to win them by force of his mere presence back to an allegiance, if not as enthusiastic as his own, yet as true. So it was that for a time on more than one quarter-deck anxiety did exist. At sea precautionary vigilance was strained against relapse. At short notice an engagement might come on. When it did, the lieutenants assigned to batteries felt it incumbent on them in some instances to stand with drawn swords behind the men working the guns.

But on board the seventy-four in which Billy now swung his hammock, very little in the manner of the men and nothing obvious in the demeanour of the officers would have suggested to an ordinary observer that the Great Mutiny was a recent event. In their general bearing and conduct the commissioned officers of a war ship naturally take their tone from the commander, that is if he has that ascendancy of character that ought to be his.

Captain the Honourable Edward Fairfax Vere, to give his full title, was a bachelor of forty or there-

abouts, a sailor of distinction, even in a time prolific of renowned seamen. Though allied to the higher nobility, his advancement had not been altogether owing to influences connected with that circumstance. He had seen much service, been in various engagements, always acquitting himself as an officer mindful of the welfare of his men, but never tolerating an infraction of discipline, thoroughly versed in the science of his profession, and intrepid to the verge of temerity, though never injudiciously so. For his gallantry in the West Indian waters as flag-lieutenant under Rodney in that Admiral's crowning victory, over De Grasse, he was made a post-captain.

Ashore in the garb of a civilian, scarce any one would have taken him for a sailor, more especially that he never garnished unprofessional talk with nautical terms, and grave in his bearing, evinced little appreciation of mere humour. It was not out of keeping with these traits that on a passage when nothing demanded his paramount action, he was the most undemonstrative of men. Any landsman observing this gentleman not conspicuous by his stature and wearing no pronounced insignia, emerging from his retreat to the open deck, and noting the silent deference of the officers retreating to leeward, might have taken him for the King's guest, a civilian aboard the King's ship, some highly honourable discreet envoy on his way to an important post. But, in fact, this unobtrusiveness of demeanour may have proceeded from a certain unaffected modesty of manner, sometimes accompanying a resolute nature, a modesty evinced at all times not calling for pronounced action, and which shown in any rank of life suggests a virtue aristocratic in kind.

As with some others engaged in various departments of the world's more heroic activities, Captain Vere, though practical enough upon occasion, would at times betray a certain dreaminess of mood. Standing alone on the weather-side of the greater deck, one hand holding by the rigging, he would absently gaze off at the black sea. At the presentation to him then of some minor matter interrupting the current of his thoughts, he would show more or less irascibility; but instantly he would control it.

In the navy he was popularly known by the appellation—Starry Vere. How such a designation happened to fall upon one who, whatever his sturdy qualities, was without any brilliant ones, was in this wise: a favourite kinsman, Lord Denton, a free-

handed fellow, had been the first to meet and congratulate him upon his return to England from the West Indian cruise, and but the day previous turning over a copy of Andrew Marvell's⁴⁴ poems had lighted, not for the first time, however, upon the lines entitled "Appleton House," the name of one of the seats of their common ancestor, a hero in the German wars of the seventeenth century, in which poem occur the lines.

Thus 'tis to have been from the first
In a domestic heaven nursed,
Under the discipline severe
Of Fairfax and the starry Vere

And so, upon embracing his cousin fresh from Rodney's victory, wherein he had played so gallant a part, brimming over with just family pride in the sailor of their house, he exuberantly exclaimed, "Give ye joy, Ed, give ye joy, my starry Vere!" This got currency, and the novel prefix serving in familiar parlance readily to distinguish the *Indomitable's* Captain from another Vere, his senior, a distant relative, an officer of like rank in the navy, it remained permanently attached to the surname.

CHAPTER VI

In view of the part that the commander of the *Indomitable* plays in scenes shortly to follow, it may be well to fill out that sketch of him outlined in the previous chapter. Aside from his qualities as a sea-officer Captain Vere was an exceptional character. Unlike no few of England's renowned sailors, long and arduous service with signal devotion to it had not resulted in absorbing and *salting* the entire man. He had a marked leaning towards everything intellectual. He loved books, never going to sea without a newly replenished library, compact but of the best. The isolated leisure, in some cases so wearisome, falling at intervals to commanders even during a war-cruise, never was tedious to Captain Vere. With nothing of that literary taste which less heeds the thing conveyed than the vehicle, his bias was towards those books to which every serious mind of superior order, occupying any active post of authority in the world, naturally inclines; books treating of actual men and events, no matter of what era—history, biography and unconventional writers, who, free from cant and convention, like Montaigne, honestly, and

⁴⁴ English poet (1621-78)

in the spirit of common sense, philosophize upon realities

In this love of reading he found confirmation of his own more reserved thoughts—confirmation which he had vainly sought in social converse, so that as touching most fundamental topics there had got to be established in him some positive convictions which he forfeit would abide in him essentially unmodified so long as his intelligent part remained unimpaired. In view of the humbled position in which his lot was cast, this was well for him. His settled convictions were as a dyke against those invading waters of novel opinion, social, political, and otherwise, which carried away as in a torrent no few minds in those days, minds by nature not inferior to his own. While other members of that aristocracy to which by birth he belonged were incensed at the innovators mainly because their theories were inimical to the privileged classes, Captain Vere disinterestedly opposed them because they seemed to him incapable of embodiment in lasting institutions, but at war with the peace of the world and the good of mankind.

With minds less stored than his and less earnest, some officers of his rank, with whom at times he would necessarily consort, found him lacking in the companionable quality, a dry and bookish gentleman as they deemed. Upon any chance withdrawal from their company one would be apt to say to another something like this: "Vere is a noble fellow, Starry Vere. 'Spite the gazettes, Sir Horatio is at bottom scarce a better seaman or fighter. But between you and me now, don't you think there is a queer streak of the pedantic running through him? Yes, like the King's yarn in a coil of navy-rope?"

Some apparent ground there was for this sort of confidential criticism, since not only did the Captain's discourse never fall into the jocosely familiar, but in illustrating any point touching the stirring personages and events of the time, he would cite some historic character or incident of antiquity with the same easy air that he would cite from the moderns. He seemed unmindful of the circumstance that to his bluff company such remote allusions, however pertinent they might really be, were altogether alien to men whose reading was mainly confined to the journals. But considerateness in such matters is not easy to natures constituted like Captain Vere's. Their honesty prescribes to them directness, sometimes fair-

reaching, like that of a migratory fowl that in its flight never heeds when it crosses a frontier.

CHAPTER VII

The lieutenants and other commissioned gentlemen forming Captain Vere's staff it is not necessary here to particularize nor needs it to make mention of any of the warrant officers. But among the petty officers was one who, having much to do with the story, may as well be forthwith introduced. This portrait I essay, but shall never hit it.

This was John Claggart, the master-at-arms. But that sea title may to landsmen seem somewhat equivocal. Originally, doubtless, that petty officer's function was the instruction of the men in the use of arms, sword, or cutlass. But very long ago, owing to the advance in gunnery making hand-to-hand encounters less frequent, and giving to nitre and sulphur the pre-eminence over steel, that function ceased, the master-at-arms of a great war ship becoming a sort of chief of police charged, among other matters, with the duty of preserving order on the populous lower gun-decks.

Claggart was a man of about five and thirty, somewhat spare and tall, yet of no ill figure upon the whole. His hand was too small and shapely to have been accustomed to hard toil. The face was a notable one, the features, all except the chin, cleanly cut as those on a Greek medallion, yet the chin, beardless as Tecumseh's, had something of the strange protuberant heaviness in its make that recalled the prints of the Rev. Dr. Titus Oates, the historical deponent with the clerical drawl in the time of Charles II, and the fraud of the alleged Popish Plot. It served Claggart in his office that his eye could cast a tutoring glance. His brow was of the sort phrenologically associated with more than average intellect, silken jet curls partly clustering over it, making a foil to the pallor below, a pallor tinged with a faint shade of amber akin to the hue of time-tinted marbles of old.

This complexion singularly contrasting with the red or deeply bronzed visages of the sailors, and in part the result of his official seclusion from the sunlight, though it was not exactly displeasing, nevertheless seemed to hint of something defective or abnormal in the constitution and blood. But his general aspect and manner were so suggestive of an education and career incongruous with his naval function, that when not actively engaged in it he looked like a

man of high quality, social and moral, who for reasons of his own was keeping incog. Nothing was known of his former life. It might be that he was an Englishman, and yet there lurked a bit of accent in his speech suggesting that possibly he was not such by birth, but through naturalization in early childhood. Among certain grizzled sea-gossips of the gun-decks and fore-castle went a rumour perdue that the master-at-arms was a chevalier who had volunteered into the King's navy by way of compounding for some mysterious swindle whereof he had been arraigned at the King's bench. The fact that nobody could substantiate this report was, of course, nothing against its secret currency. Such a rumour once started on the gun-decks in reference to almost any one below the rank of a commissioned officer would, during the period assigned to this narrative, have seemed not altogether wanting in credibility to the tarry old wisecracks of a man-of-war crew. And indeed a man of Claggart's accomplishments, without prior nautical experience entering the navy at mature life, as he did, and necessarily allotted at the start to the lowest grade in it, a man, too, who never made allusion to his previous life ashore, these were circumstances which in the dearth of exact knowledge as to his true antecedents opened to the invidious a vague field for unfavourable surmise.

But the sailors' dog-watch gossip concerning him derived a vague plausibility from the fact that now, for some period, the British Navy could so little afford to be squeamish in the matter of keeping up the muster-rolls, that not only were press-gangs notoriously abroad both afloat and ashore, but there was little or no secret about another matter, namely, that the London police were at liberty to capture any able-bodied suspect, and any questionable fellow at large, and summarily ship him to the dock-yard or fleet. Furthermore, even among voluntary enlistments, there were instances where the motive thereto partook neither of patriotic impulse nor yet of a random desire to experience a bit of sea-life and martial adventure. Insolvent debtors of minor grade, together with the promiscuous lame ducks of morality, found in the navy a convenient and secure refuge. Secure, because once enlisted aboard a King's ship, they were as much in sanctuary as the transgressor of the middle ages harbouring himself under the shadow of the altar. Such sanctioned irregularities, which for obvious reasons the Government would hardly think

to parade at the time—and which consequently, and as affecting the least influential class of mankind, have all but dropped into oblivion—lend colour to something for the truth whereof I do not vouch, and hence have some scruple in stating, something I remember having seen in print, though the book I cannot recall, but the same thing was personally communicated to me now more than forty years ago by an old pensioner in a cocked hat, with whom I had a most interesting talk on the terrace at Greenwich, a Baltimore negro, a Trafalgar man. It was to this effect. In the case of a war-ship short of hands, whose speedy sailing was imperative, the deficient quota, in lack of any other way of making it good, would be eked out by drafts called direct from the jails. For reasons previously suggested it would not perhaps be very easy at the present day directly to prove or disprove the allegation. But allowed as a verity, how significant would it be of England's straits at the time, confronted by those wars which, like a flight of harpies, rose shrieking from the din and dust of the fallen Bastille. That era appears measurably clear to us who look back at it, and but read of it. But to the grandfathers of us greybeards, the thoughtful of them, the genius of it presented an aspect like that of Camoens's⁴⁵ "Spirit of the Cape," an eclipsing menace, mysterious and prodigious. Not America was exempt from apprehension. At the height of Napoleon's unexampled conquests, there were Americans who had fought at Bunker Hill, who looked forward to the possibility that the Atlantic might prove no barrier against the ultimate schemes of this portentous upstart from the revolutionary chaos, who seemed in act of fulfilling the judgment prefigured in the Apocalypse.⁴⁶

But the less credence was to be given to the gun-deck talk touching Claggart, seeing that no man holding his office in a man-of-war can ever hope to be popular with the crew. Besides, in derogatory comments upon any one against whom they have a grudge, or for any reason or no reason mislike, sailors are much like landmen, they are apt to exaggerate or romance it.

About as much was really known to the *Indomitable's* tars of the master-at-arms' career before entering the service as an astronomer knows about a

⁴⁵ Luiz Vaz de Camoens or Camões (1524–80), Portuguese poet.

⁴⁶ The Revelation of St. John the Divine (last book of the New Testament).

comet's travels prior to its first observable appearance in the sky. The verdict of the sea quidnuncs has been cited only by way of showing what sort of moral impression the man made upon rude uncultivated natures whose conceptions of human wickedness were necessarily of the narrowest, limited to ideas of vulgar rascality,—a thief among the swinging hammocks during a night-watch, or the man-brokers and land-sharks of the seaports.

It was no gossip, however, but fact, that though, as before hinted, Claggart upon his entrance into the navy was, as a novice, assigned to the least honourable section of a man-of-war's crew, embracing the drudges, he did not long remain there.

The superior capacity he immediately evinced, his constitutional sobriety, his ingratiating deference to superiors, together with a peculiar fretting genius manifested on a singular occasion, all this capped by a certain austere patriotism, abruptly advanced him to the position of master-at-arms.

Of this maritime chief of police the ship's corporals, so called, were the immediate subordinates, and compliant ones, and thus, as is to be noted in some business departments ashore, almost to a degree inconsistent with entire moral volition. His place put various converging wires of underground influence under the chief's control, capable when astutely worked through his understappers of operating to the mysterious discomfort, if nothing worse, of any of the sea-commonalty.

CHAPTER VIII

Life in the foretop well agreed with Billy Budd. There, when not actually engaged on the yards yet higher aloft, the topmen, who as such had been picked out for youth and activity, constituted an aerial club, lounging at ease against the smaller stunsails rolled up into cushions, spinning yarns like the lazy gods, and frequently amused with what was going on in the busy world of the decks below. No wonder then that a young fellow of Billy's disposition was well content in such society. Giving no cause of offence to anybody, he was always alert at a call. So in the merchant service it had been with him. But now such punctiliousness in duty was shown that his topmates would sometimes good naturedly laugh at him for it. This heightened alacrity had its cause, namely, the impression made upon him by the first formal gangway-punishment he had ever witnessed,

which befell the day following his impressment. It had been incurred by a little fellow, young, a novice, an afterguardsman absent from his assigned post when the ship was being put about, a dereliction resulting in a rather serious hitch to that manoeuvre, one demanding instantaneous promptitude in letting go and making fast. When Billy saw the culprit's naked back under the scourge gridironed with red welts, and worse, when he marked the dire expression in the liberated man's face, as with his woolen shirt flung over him by the executioner, he rushed forward from the spot to bury himself in the crowd. Billy was horrified. He resolved that never through remissness would he make himself liable to such a visitation, or do or omit aught that might merit even verbal reproof. What then was his surprise and concern when ultimately he found himself getting into petty trouble occasionally about such matters as the stowage of his bag, or something amiss in his hammock, matters under the police oversight of the ship's corporals of the lower decks, and which brought down on him a vague threat from one of them.

So heedful in all things as he was, how could this be? He could not understand it, and it more than vexed him. When he spoke to his young topmates about it, they were either lightly incredulous, or found something comical in his unconcealed anxiety. "Is it your bag, Billy?" said one, "well, sew yourself up in it, Billy boy, and then you'll be sure to know if anybody meddles with it."

Now there was a veteran aboard who, because his years began to disqualify him for more active work, had been recently assigned duty as mainmastman in his watch, looking to the gear belayed at the rail round about that great spar near the deck. At off-times the foretopman had picked up some acquaintance with him, and now in his trouble it occurred to him that he might be the sort of person to go to for wise counsel. He was an old Dansker long Anglicized in the service, of few words, many wrinkles and some honourable scars. His wizened face, time-tinted and weather-stormed to the complexion of an antique parchment, was here and there peppered blue by the chance explosion of a gun-cartridge in action. He was an *Agamemnon*-man, some two years prior to the time of this story having served under Nelson, when but Sir Horatio, in that ship immortal in naval memory, and which, dismantled and in part broken up to her bare ribs, is seen a grand skeleton in Haydon's

etching As one of a boarding-party from the *Agamemnon* he had received a cut slantwise along one temple and cheek, leaving a long pale scar like a streak of dawn's light falling athwart the dark visage. It was on account of that scar and the affair in which it was known that he had received it, as well as from his blue-peppered complexion, that the Dansker went among the *Indomitable's* crew by the name of "Board-her-in-the-smoke."

Now the first time that his small weazel-eyes happened to light on Billy Budd, a certain grim internal merriment set all his ancient wrinkles into antic play. Was it that his eccentric unsentimental old sapience, primitive in its kind, saw, or thought it saw, something which in contrast with the war-ship's environment looked oddly incongruous in the Handsome Sailor? But after slyly studying him at intervals, the old Merlin's equivocal merriment was modified, for now when the twain would meet, it would start in his face a quizzing sort of look, but it would be but momentary, and sometimes replaced by an expression of speculative query as to what might eventually befall a nature like that, dropped into a world not without some man-traps and against whose subtleties simple courage lacking experience and address and without any touch of defensive ugliness is of little avail, and where such innocence as man is capable of does yet, in a moral emergency, not always sharpen the faculties or enlighten the will.

However it was, the Dansker in his ascetic way rather took to Billy. Nor was this only because of a certain philosophic interest in such a character. There was another cause. While the old man's eccentricities, sometimes bordering on the ursine, repelled the juniors, Billy, undeterred thereby, would make advances, never passing the old *Agamemnon*-man without a salutation marked by that respect which is seldom lost on the aged, however crabbed at times, or whatever then station in life. There was a vein of dry humour, or what not, in the mastman, and whether in freak of patriarchal irony touching Billy's youth and athletic frame, or for some other and more recondite reason, from the first in addressing him he always substituted Baby for Billy. The Dansker, in fact, being the originator of the name by which the foretopman eventually became known aboard ship.

Well then, in his mysterious little difficulty going in quest of the wrinkled one, Billy found him off duty in a dog-watch ruminating by himself, seated

on a shot-box of the upper gun-deck, now and then surveying with a somewhat cynical regard certain of the more swaggering promenaders there. Billy recounted his trouble, again wondering how it all happened. The salt seer attentively listened, accompanying the foretopman's recitals with queer twitchings of his wrinkles and problematical little sparkles of his small ferret eyes. Making an end of his story, the foretopman asked, "And now, Dansker, do tell me what you think of it?"

The old man, shoving up the front of his tarpaulin and deliberately rubbing the long slant scar at the point where it entered the thin hair, laconically said, "Baby Budd, *Jimmy Legs*" (meaning the master-at-arms) "is down on you."

"*Jimmy Legs*?" ejaculated Billy, his welkin eyes expanding, "what for? Why, he calls me *the sweet and pleasant young fellow*, they tell me."

"Does he so?" grinned the grizzled one; then said, "Ay, Baby Lad, a sweet voice has *Jimmy Legs*."

"No, not always. But to me he has. I seldom pass him but there comes a pleasant word."

"And that's because he's down upon you, Baby Budd."

Such reiteration along with the manner of it, incomprehensible to a novice, disturbed Billy almost as much as the mystery for which he had sought explanation. Something less unpleasingly oracular he tried to extract. But the old sea Chiron, thinking perhaps that for the nonce he had sufficiently instructed his young Achilles, pursed his lips, gathered all his wrinkles together, and would commit himself to nothing further.

Years, and those experiences which befall certain shrewder men subordinated life-long to the will of superiors, all this had developed in the Dansker the pithy guarded cynicism that was his leading characteristic.

CHAPTER IX

The next day an incident served to confirm Billy Budd in his incredulity as to the Dansker's strange summing up of the case submitted.

The ship at noon going large before the wind was rolling on her course, and he, below at dinner and engaged in some sportful talk with the members of his mess, chanced in a sudden lurch to spill the entire contents of his soup-pan upon the new scrubbed deck. Claggart, the master-at-arms, official

rattan in hand, happened to be passing along the battery, in a bay of which the mess was lodged, and the greasy liquid streamed just across his path. Stepping over it, he was proceeding on his way without comment, since the matter was nothing to take notice of under the circumstances, when he happened to observe who it was that had done the spilling. His countenance changed. Pausing, he was about to ejaculate something hasty at the sailor, but checked himself, and pointing down to the streaming soup playfully tapped him from behind with his rattan, saying, in a low musical voice, peculiar to him at times, "Handsomely done, my lad! And handsome is as handsome did it, too!" and with that passed on. Not noted by Billy as not coming within his view was the involuntary smile, or rather grimace, that accompanied Claggart's equivocal words. Andly it drew down the thin corners of his shapely mouth. But everybody taking his remark as meant for humorous, and at which therefore as coming from a superior, they were bound to laugh, "with counterfeited glee" acted accordingly, and Billy tickled, it may be, by the allusion to his being the handsome sailor, merrily joined in, then addressing his messmates exclaimed, "There now, who says that *Jimmy Legs* is down on me!"

"And who said he was, Beauty?" demanded one Donald with some surprise. Whereat the foretopman looked a little foolish, recalling that it was only one person, Board-heer-in the smoke, who had suggested what to him was the smoky idea that this master-at-arms was in any peculiar way hostile to him. Mean time that functionary resuming his path must have momentarily worn some expression less guarded than that of the bitter smile and, usurping the face from the heart, some distorting expression perhaps, for a drummer-boy heedlessly frolicking along from the opposite direction, and chancing to come into light collision with his person was strangely disconcerted by his aspect. Nor was the impression lessened when the official, impulsively giving him a sharp cut with the rattan, vehemently exclaimed, "Look where you go!"

CHAPTER X

What was the matter with the master-at-arms? And, be the matter what it might, how could it have direct relation to Billy Budd, with whom prior to the affair of the spilled soup he had never come into any

special contact, official or otherwise? What indeed could the trouble have to do with one so little inclined to give offence as the merchantship's *peace maker*, even him who in Claggart's own phrase was "The sweet and pleasant young fellow"? Yes, why should *Jimmy Legs*, to borrow the Dansker's expression, be *down* on the Handsome Sailor?

But at heart and not for nothing, as the late chance encounter may indicate to the discerning, down on him, secretly down on him, he assuredly was.

Now to invent something touching the more private career of Claggart—something involving Billy Budd, of which something the latter should be wholly ignorant, some romantic incident implying that Claggart's knowledge of the young blue-jacket began at some period anterior to catching sight of him on board the seventy four—all this, not so difficult to do, might avail in a way more or less interesting to account for whatever enigma may appear to lurk in the case. But, in fact, there was nothing of the sort. And yet the cause, necessarily to be assumed as the sole one assignable, is in its very realism as much charged with that prime element of Radcliffian romance, the *mysterious*, as any that the ingenuity of the author of the "Mysteries of Udolpho" could devise. For what can more partake of the mysterious than an antipathy spontaneous and profound such as is evoked in certain exceptional mortals by the mere aspect of some other mortal, however harmless he may be?—if not called forth by that very harmlessness itself.

Now there can exist no irritating juxtaposition of dissimilar personalities comparable to that which is possible aboard a great war-ship fully manned and at sea. There, every day, among all ranks, almost every man comes into more or less of contact with almost every other man. Wholly there to avoid even the sight of an aggravating object one must needs give it Jonah's toss, or jump overboard himself. Imagine how all this might eventually operate on some peculiar human creature the direct reverse of a saint?

But for the adequate comprehending of Claggart by a normal nature, these hints are insufficient. To pass from a normal nature to him one must cross "the deadly space between," and this is best done by indirection.

Long ago an honest scholar, my senior, said to me in reference to one who like himself is now no more, a man so unimpeachably respectable that against him nothing was ever openly said, though among the few

something was whispered, "Yes, X—— is a nut not to be cracked by the tap of a lady's fan. You are aware that I am the adherent of no organized religion, much less of any philosophy built into a system. Well, for all that, I think that to try and get into X——, enter his labyrinth and get out again, without a clue derived from some source other than what is known as *knowledge of the world*, that were hardly possible, at least for me."

"Why," said I, "X——, however singular a study to some, is yet human, and knowledge of the world assuredly implies the knowledge of human nature, and in most of its varieties."

"Yes, but a superficial knowledge of it, serving ordinary purposes. But for anything deeper, I am not certain whether to know the world and to know human nature be not two distinct branches of knowledge, which while they may co-exist in the same heart, yet either may exist with little or nothing of the other. Nay, in an average man of the world, his constant rubbing with it blunts that fine spiritual insight indispensable to the understanding of the essential in certain exceptional characters, whether evil ones or good. In a matter of some importance I have seen a girl wind an old lawyer about her little finger. Nor was it the dotage of senile love. Nothing of the sort. But he knew law better than he knew the girl's heart. Coke and Blackstone hardly shed so much light into obscure spiritual places as the Hebrew prophets. And who were they? Mostly recluses."

At the time my inexperience was such that I did not quite see the drift of all this. It may be that I see it now. And, indeed, if that lexicon which is based on Holy Writ were any longer popular, one might with less difficulty define and denominate certain phenomenal men. As it is, one must turn to some authority not liable to the charge of being tinctured with the Biblical element.

In a list of definitions included in the authentic translation of Plato, a list attributed to him, occurs this: "Natural Depravity: a depravity according to nature." A definition which though savouring of Calvinism by no means involves Calvin's dogma as to total mankind. Evidently its intent makes it applicable but to individuals. Not many are the examples of this depravity which the gallows and jail supply. At any rate, for notable instances,—since these have no vulgar alloy of the brute in them, but invariably are dominated by intellectuality,—one must go else-

where. Civilization, especially if of the austerer sort, is auspicious to it. It folds itself in the mantle of respectability. It has its certain negative virtues serving as silent auxiliaries. It never allows wine to get within its guard. It is not going too far to say that it is without vices or small sins. There is a phenomenal pride in it that excludes them from anything. Never mercenary or avaricious. In short, the depravity here meant partakes nothing of the sordid or sensual. It is serious, but free from acerbity. Though no flatterer of mankind it never speaks ill of it.

But the thing which in eminent instances signalizes so exceptional a nature is this: though the man's even temper and discreet bearing would seem to intimate a mind peculiarly subject to the law of reason, not the less in his soul's recesses he would seem to riot in complete exemption from that law, having apparently little to do with reason further than to employ it as an ambidexter implement for effecting the irrational. That is to say: towards the accomplishment of an aim which in wantonness of malignity would seem to partake of the insane, he will direct a cool judgment sagacious and sound.

These men are true madmen, and of the most dangerous sort, for their lunacy is not continuous, but occasional, evoked by some special object; it is secretive and self-contained: so that when most active it is, to the average mind, not distinguished from sanity, and for the reason above suggested that whatever its aims may be (and the aim is never disclosed) the method and the outward proceeding is always perfectly rational.

Now something such was Claggart, in whom was the mania of an evil nature, not engendered by vicious training or corrupting books or licentious living, but born with him and innate, in short, "a depravity according to nature."

Can it be this phenomenon, disowned or not acknowledged, that in some criminal cases puzzles the courts? For this cause have our juries at times not only to endure the prolonged contentions of lawyers with their fees, but also the yet more perplexing strife of the medical experts with theirs? But why leave it to them? Why not subpoena as well the clerical proficients? Their vocation bringing them into peculiar contact with so many human beings, and sometimes in their least guarded hour, in interviews very much more confidential than those of physician and patient; this would seem to qualify them to know something

about those intricacies involved in the question of moral responsibility whether in a given case, say, the crime proceeded from mania in the brain or rabies of the heart. As to any differences among themselves these clinical proficientes might develop on the stand, these could hardly be greater than the direct contradictions exchanged between the remunerated medical experts.

Dark sayings are these, some will say. But why? It is because they somewhat savour of Holy Writ in its phrase 'mysteries of iniquity'.

The point of the story turning on the hidden nature of the master-at-arms has necessitated this chapter. With an added hint or two in connection with the incident at the mess, the resumed narrative must be left to vindicate, as it may, its own credibility.

CHAPTER XI

Pale ire, envy and despair

That Claggart's figure was not amiss, and his face, save the chin, well moulded, has already been said. Of these favourable points he seemed not insensible, for he was not only neat but careful in his dress. But the form of Billy Budd was heroic, and if his face was without the intellectual look of the pallid Claggart's, not the less was it lit, like his, from within, though from a different source. The bonfire in his heart made luminous the rose-tan in his cheek.

In view of the marked contrast between the persons of the twain, it is more than probable that when the master-at-arms in the scene last given applied to the sailor the proverb *Handsome is as handsome does* he there let escape an ironic inkling, not caught by the young sailors who heard it, as to what it was that had first moved him against Billy, namely, his significant personal beauty.

Now envy and antipathy, passions unreconcilable in reason, nevertheless in fact may spring conjoined like Chang and Eng in one birth. Is Envy then such a monster? Well, though many an arraigned mortal has in hopes of mitigated penalty pleaded guilty to horrible actions, did ever anybody seriously confess to envy? Something there is in it universally felt to be more shameful than even felonious crime. And not only does everybody disown it, but the better sort are inclined to incredulity when it is in earnest imputed to an intelligent man. But since its lodgment

is in the heart, not the brain, no degree of intellect supplies a guarantee against it. But Claggart's was no vulgar form of the passion. Nor, as directed toward Billy Budd, did it partake of that streak of apprehensive jealousy which murred Saul's visage perturbedly brooding on the comely young David. Claggart's envy struck deeper. If askance he eyed the good looks, cheery health and frank enjoyment of young life in Billy Budd, it was because these happened to go along with a nature that, as Claggart magnetically felt, had in its simplicity never willed malice or experienced the reactionary bite of that serpent. To him, the spirit lodged within Billy, and looking out from his welkin eyes as from windows, that ineffability it was which made the dimple in his dyed cheeks, supplied his joints, and dancing in his yellow curls made him pre-eminently the Handsome Sailor. One person excepted, the master-at-arms was perhaps the only man in the ship intellectually capable of adequately appreciating the moral phenomenon presented in Billy Budd, and the insight but intensified his passion, which, assuming various secret forms within him, at times assumed that of cynic disdain—disdain of innocence. To be nothing more than innocent! Yet in an æsthetic way he saw the charm of it, the courageous free-and-easy temper of it, and fair would have shared it, but he despaired of it.

With no power to annul the elemental evil in himself, though readily enough he could hide it, apprehending the good, but powerless to be it, a nature like Claggart's, suchaiged with energy as such natures almost invariably are, what recourse is left to it but to recoil upon itself and, like the scorpion for which the Creator alone is responsible, act out to the end the part allotted it.

Passion, and passion in its profoundest, is not a thing demanding a palatial stage whereon to play its part. Down among the groundlings, among the beggars and rascals of the garbage, profound passion is enacted. And the circumstances that provoke it, however trivial or mean, are no measure of its power. In the present instance the stage is a scrubbed gun deck, and one of the external provocations a man-of-war's man's spilled soup.

Now when the master-at-arms noticed whence came that greasy fluid streaming before his feet, he must have taken it—to some extent wilfully perhaps—not for the mere accident it assuredly was, but for the sly escape of a spontaneous feeling on Billy's part

more or less answering to the antipathy on his own. In effect a foolish demonstration he must have thought, and very harmless, like the futile kick of a heifer, which yet were the heifer a shod stallion would not be so harmless. Even so was it that into the gall of envy Claggart infused the vitriol of his contempt. But the incident confirmed to him certain tell-tale reports purveyed to his ear by *Squeak*, one of his more cunning corporals, a grizzled little man, so nicknamed by the sailors on account of his squeaky voice and sharp visage ferreting about the dark corners of the lower decks after interlopers, satirically suggesting to them the idea of a rat in a cellar.

Now his chief's employing him as an implicit tool in laying little traps for the worryment of the foretopman—for it was from the master-at-arms that the petty persecutions heretofore adverted to had proceeded—the corporal, having naturally enough concluded that his master could have no love for the sailor, made it his business, faithful understrapper that he was, to ferment the ill blood by perverting to his chief certain innocent frolics of the good-natured foretopman, besides inventing for his mouth sundry contumelious epithets he claims to have overheard him let fall. The master-at-arms never suspected the veracity of these reports, more especially as to the epithets, for he well knew how secretly unpopular may become a master-at-arms—at least a master-at-arms of those days, zealous in his function—and how the blue-jackets shout at him in private their raillery and wit, the nickname by which he goes among them (*Jimmy Legs*) implying under the form of merriment their cherished disrespect and dislike.

But in view of the greediness of hate for provocation, it hardly needed a purveyor to feed Claggart's passion. An uncommon prudence is habitual with the subtler depravity, for it has everything to hide. And in case of any merely suspected injury its secretive-ness voluntarily cuts off from enlightenment or disillusion, and not unreluctantly, action is taken upon surmise as upon certainty. And the retaliation is apt to be in monstrous disproportion to the supposed offence; for when in anybody was revenge in its exactions aught else but an inordinate usurer? But how with Claggart's conscience? For though consciences are unlike as foreheads, every intelligence, not excluding the Scriptural devils who "believe and tremble," has one. But Claggart's conscience being but the lawyer to his will, made ogres of trifles, probably

arguing that the motive imputed to Billy, in spilling the soup just when he did, together with the epithets alleged—these, if nothing more, made a strong case against him; nay, justified animosity into a sort of retributive righteousness. The Pharisee is the Guy Fawkes prowling in the hid chambers underlying some natures like Claggart's. And they can really form no conception of an unreciprocated malice. Probably, the master-at-arms' clandestine persecution of Billy was started to try the temper of the man, but it had not developed any quality in him that enmity could make official use of, or ever pervert into even plausible self-justification, so that the occurrence at the mess, petty if it were, was a welcome one to that peculiar conscience assigned to be the private mentor of Claggart, and for the rest, not improbably it put him upon new experiments.

CHAPTER XII

Not many days after the last incident narrated, something befell Billy Budd that more gravelled him than aught that had previously occurred.

It was a warm night for the latitude; and the foretopman, whose watch at the time was properly below, was dozing on the uppermost deck whither he had ascended from his hot hammock—one of hundreds suspended so closely wedged together over a lower gun-deck that there was little or no swing to them. He lay as in the shadow of a hull-side stretched under the lee of the booms, a piled ridge of spare spars, and among which the ship's largest boat, the launch, was stowed. Alongside of three other slumberers from below, he lay near one end of the booms which approached from the foremast, his station aloft on duty as a foretopman being just over the deck station of the forecastle men entitling him according to usage to make himself more or less at home in that neighbourhood.

Presently he was stirred into semi-consciousness by somebody, who must have previously sounded the sleep of the others, touching his shoulder, and then as the foretopman raised his head, breathing into his ear in a quick whisper, "Slip into the lee fore-chains, Billy; there is something in the wind—don't speak. Quick. I will meet you there"; and disappeared.

Now Billy—like sundry other essentially good-natured ones—had some of the weakness inseparable from essential good nature, and among these was a

reluctance, almost an incapacity of plumply saying *no* to an abrupt proposition not obviously absurd, on the face of it, nor obviously unfriendly, nor iniquitous. And being of warm blood he had not the phlegm to negative any proposition by unresponsive inaction. Like his sense of fear, his apprehension as to aught outside of the honest and natural was seldom very quick. Besides, upon the present occasion, the drowse from his sleep still hung upon him.

However it was, he mechanically rose and, sleepily wondering what could be *in the wind*, betook himself to the designated place, a narrow platform, one of six, outside of the high bulwarks and screened by the great dead eyes and multiple columned lanyards of the shrouds and back-stays, and, in a great war ship of that time, of dimensions commensurate to the ample hull's magnitude, a tarry balcony, in short, overhanging the sea, and so secluded that one manner of the *Indomitable*, a non-conformist old tar of serious turn, made it even in daytime his private oratory.

In this retired nook the stranger soon joined Billy Budd. There was no moon as yet, a haze obscured the starlight. He could not distinctly see the stranger's face. Yet from something in the outline and carriage, Billy took him to be, and correctly, one of the after-guard.

"Hist, Billy!" said the man, in the same quick cautionary whisper as before, "You were impressed, weren't you? Well, so was I," and he paused as to mark the effect. But Billy, not knowing exactly what to make of this, said nothing. Then the other "We are not the only impressed ones, Billy. There's a gang of us. Couldn't you—help—at a pinch?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Billy, here shaking off his drowse.

"Hist, hist!" the hurried whisper now growing husky, "see here," and the man held up two small objects faintly twinkling in the night light, "see, they are yours, Billy, if you'll only—"

But Billy here broke in, and in his resentful eagerness to deliver himself his vocal infirmity somewhat intruded, "D D Damme, I don't know what you are driving at, or what you mean, but you had better g-g-go where you belong!" For the moment the fellow, as confounded, did not stir, and Billy, springing to his feet, said, "If you don't start, I'll t-t-toss you back over the rail!" There was no mistaking this, and the mysterious emissary decamped, disappearing

in the direction of the mainmast in the shadow of the booms.

"Hello, what's the matter?" here came growling from a forecandleman awakened from his deck-doze by Billy's raised voice. And as the foretopman reappeared and was recognized by him, "Ah, *Beauty*, is it you? Well, something must have been the matter for you st st stuttered."

"Oh," rejoined Billy, now mastering the impediment, "I found an afterguardsman in our part of the ship here and I bid him be off where he belongs."

"And is that all you did about it, foretopman?" gruffly demanded another, an irascible old fellow of brick coloured visage and hair, and who was known to his associate forecandlemen as *Red Pepper*.

"Such sneaks I should like to marry to the gunner's daughter!" by that expression meaning that he would like to subject them to disciplinary castigation over a gun.

However, Billy's rendering of the matter satisfactorily accounted to these inquirers for the brief commotion, since of all the sections of a ship's company the forecandlemen, veterans for the most part, and bigoted in their sea-prejudices, are the most jealous in resenting territorial encroachments, especially on the part of any of the afterguard, of whom they have but a sorry opinion, chiefly landsmen, never going aloft except to reef or furl the mainsail, and in no wise competent to handle a marlingspike or turn in a *dead-eye*, say.

CHAPTER XIII

This incident sorely puzzled Billy Budd. It was an entirely new experience, the first time in his life that he had ever been personally approached in underhanded intriguing fashion. Prior to this encounter he had known nothing of the afterguardsman, the two men being stationed wide apart, one forward and aloft during his watch, the other on deck and aft.

What could it mean? And could they really be gunceas, those two glittering objects the interloper had held up to his (Billy's) eyes? Where could the fellow get gunceas? Why, even buttons, spare buttons, are not so plentiful at sea. The more he turned the matter over, the more he was nonplussed, and made uneasy and discomfited. In his disgustful recoil from an overture which, though he but ill comprehended, he instinctively knew must involve evil of some sort—Billy Budd was like a young horse fresh from the

pasture suddenly inhaling a vile whiff from some chemical factory, and by repeated snortings trying to get it out of his nostrils and lungs. This frame of mind barred all desire of holding further parley with the fellow, even were it but for the purpose of gaining some enlightenment as to his design in approaching him. And yet he was not without natural curiosity to see how such a visitor in the dark would look in broad day.

He espied him the following afternoon in his first dog-watch below, one of the smokers on that forward part of the upper gun-deck allotted to the pipe. He recognized him by his general cut and build, more than by his round freckled face and glassy eyes of pale blue, veiled with lashes all but white. And yet Billy was a bit uncertain whether indeed it were he—yonder chap about his own age, chatting and laughing in a free-hearted way, leaning against a gun, a genial young fellow enough to look at, and something of a rattlebrain, to all appearance. Rather chubby, too, for a sailor, even an afterguardsman. In short, the last man in the world, one would think, to be overburdened with thoughts, especially those perilous thoughts that must needs belong to a conspirator in any serious project, or even to the underling of such a conspirator.

Although Billy was not aware of it, the fellow, with one sidelong glance had perceived Billy first, and then noting that Billy was looking at him, thereupon nodded a familiar sort of friendly recognition as to an old acquaintance, without interrupting the talk he was engaged in with the group of smokers. A day or two afterwards, chancing in the evening promenade on a gun-deck, to pass Billy, he offered a flying word of good-fellowship, as it were, which by its unexpectedness, and equivocalness under the circumstances, so embarrassed Billy that he knew not how to respond to it, and let it go unnoticed.

Billy was now left more at a loss than before. The ineffectual speculations into which he was led were so disturbingly alien to him that he did his best to smother them. It never entered his mind that here was a matter, which, from its extreme questionable-ness, it was his duty as a loyal blue-jacket to report in the proper quarter. And, probably, had such a step been suggested to him, he would have been deterred from taking it by the thought, one of novice-magnanimity, that it would savour overmuch of the dirty work of a tell-tale. He kept the thing to himself.

Yet upon one occasion he could not forbear a little disburthening himself to the old Dansker, tempted thereto perhaps by the influence of a balmy night when the ship lay becalmed; the twain, silent for the most part, sitting together on deck, their heads propped against the bulwarks. But it was only a partial and anonymous account that Bill gave, the unfounded scruples above referred to preventing full disclosure to anybody. Upon hearing Billy's version, the sage Dansker seemed to divine more than he was told, and after a little meditation, during which his wrinkles were pursed as into a point—quite effacing for the time that quizzing expression his face sometimes wore,—“Didn't I say so, Baby Budd?”

“Say what?” demanded Billy.

“Why, *Jimmy Legs* is down on you.”

“And what,” rejoined Billy in amazement, “has *Jimmy Legs* to do with that cracked afterguardsman?”

“Ho, it was an afterguardsman, then. A cat's-paw, a cat's-paw!” And with that exclamation, which, whether it had reference to a light puff of air just then coming over the calm sea, or subtler relation to the afterguardsman, there is no telling. The old Merlin gave a twisting wrench with his black teeth at his plug of tobacco, vouchsafing no reply to Billy's impetuous question, though now repeated, for it was his wont to relapse into grim silence when interrogated in sceptical sort as to any of his sententious oracles, not always very clear ones, but rather partaking of that obscurity which invests most Delphic deliverances from any quarter.

CHAPTER XIV

Long experience had very likely brought this old man to that bitter prudence which never interferes in aught, and never gives advice.

Yes, despite the Dansker's pithy insistence as to the master-at-arms being at the bottom of these strange experiences of Billy on board the *Indomitable*, the young sailor was ready to ascribe them to almost anybody but the man who, to use Billy's own expression, “always had a pleasant word for him.” This is to be wondered at. Yet not so much to be wondered at. In certain matters, some sailors even in mature life, remain unsophisticated enough. But a young seafarer of the disposition of our athletic foretopman is yet very much of a child-man. And yet a child's utter innocence is but its blank ignorance, and the inno-

cence more or less wanes as intelligence waxes. But in Billy Budd intelligence, such as it was, had advanced, while yet his simple mindedness remained for the most part unaffected. Experience is a teacher indeed, yet did Billy's years make his experience small. Besides he had none of that intuitive knowledge of the bad which, in natures not good or incompletely so, foreruns experience, and therefore may pertain, as in some instances it too clearly does pertain, even to youth.

And what could Billy know of man except of man as a mere sailor? And the old-fashioned sailor, the veritable man-before-the-mast, the sailor from boyhood up, he, though indeed of the same species as a landsman, is in some respects singularly distinct from him. The sailor is frankness, the landsman is finesse. Life is not a game with the sailor, demanding the long head, no intricate game of chess where few moves are made in straightforwardness, and ends are attained by indirection, an oblique, tedious barren game hardly worth that poor candle burnt out in playing it.

Yes, as a class, sailors are in character a juvenile race. Even their deviations are marked by juvenility. And this more especially holding true with the sailors of Billy's time. Then, too, certain things which apply to all sailors do more pointedly operate here and there upon the junior one. Every sailor, too, is accustomed to obey orders without debating them, his life afloat is externally ruled for him, he is not brought into that promiscuous commerce with mankind where unobstructed free agency on equal terms—equal superficially at least—soon teaches one that unless upon occasion he exercises a distrust keen in proportion to the fairness of the appearance, some foul turn may be served him. A ruled, undemonstrative distrustfulness is so habitual, not with business-men so much, as with men who know their kind in less shallow relations than business, namely certain men-of-the-world, that they come at last to employ it all but unconsciously, and some of them would very likely feel real surprise at being charged with it as one of their general characteristics.

CHAPTER XV

But after the little matter at the mess Billy Budd no more found himself in strange trouble at times about his hammock or his clothes bag, or what not. While, as to that smile that occasionally sunned him,

and the pleasant passing word these were, if not more frequent, yet if anything more pronounced than before.

But for all that there were certain other demonstrations now. When Claggart's unobserved glance happened to light on belted Billy rolling along the upper gun-deck in the leisure of the second dog-watch, exchanging passing broadsides of fun with other young promenaders in the crowd, that glance would follow the cheerful sea Hyperion with a settled meditative and melancholy expression, his eyes strangely suffused with incipient feverish tears. Then would Claggart look like the man of sorrows. Yes, and sometimes the melancholy expression would have in it a touch of soft yearning, as if Claggart could even have loved Billy but for fate and ban. But this was an evanescence, and quickly repented of, as it were, by an immittigable look, pinching and shrivelling the visage into the momentary semblance of a wrinkled walnut. But sometimes, catching sight in advance of the foretopman coming in his direction, he would, upon their nearing, step aside a little to let him pass, dwelling upon Billy for the moment with the glittering dental satire of a Gusc. But upon an abrupt unforeseen encounter, a red light would flash forth from his eye, like a spark from an anvil in a dusky smithy. That quick fierce light was a strange one, darted from orbs which in repose were of the colour nearest approaching a deeper violet, the softest of shades.

Though some of these caprices of the pit could not but be observed by their object, yet were they beyond the construing of such a nature. And the thews of Billy were hardly comparable with that sort of sensitive spiritual organization which in some cases instinctively conveys to ignorant innocence an admonition of the proximity of the malign. He thought the master-at-arms acted in a manner rather queer at times. That was all. But the occasional frank and pleasant word went for what they purported to be, the young sailor never having heard as yet of the "too fair-spoken man."

Had the foretopman been conscious of having done or said anything to provoke the ill will of the official, it would have been different with him, and his sight might have been purged if not sharpened.

So was it with him in yet another matter. Two minor officers, the armourer, and captain of the hold, with whom he had never exchanged a word, his

position on the ship not bringing him into contact with them, these men now for the first began to cast upon Billy, when they chanced to encounter him, that peculiar glance which evidences that the man from whom it comes has been some way tampered with, and to the prejudice of him upon whom the glance lights. Never did it occur to Billy as a thing to be noted, or a thing suspicious, though he well knew the fact that the armourer and captain of the hold, with the ship's yeoman, apothecary, and others of that grade, were by naval usage, mess-mates of the master-at-arms, men with ears convenient to his confidential tongue.

But the general popularity that our Handsome Sailor's manly forwardness upon occasion, and irresistible good nature, indicating no mental superiority tending to excite an invidious feeling, this good will on the part of most of his shipmates made him the less to concern himself about such mute aspects toward him as those whereto allusion has just been made.

As to the afterguardsman, though Billy for reasons already given, necessarily saw little of him, yet when the two did happen to meet, invariably came the fellow's off-hand cheerful recognition, sometimes accompanied by a passing pleasant word or two. Whatever that equivocal young person's original design may really have been, or the design of which he might have been the deputy, certain it was from his manner upon these occasions, that he had wholly dropped it.

It was as if his precocity of crookedness (and every vulgar villain is precocious) had for once deceived him, and the man he had sought to entrap as a simpleton had, through his very simplicity, baffled him.

But shrewd ones may opine that it was hardly possible for Billy to refrain from going up to the afterguardsman and bluntly demanding to know his purpose in the initial interview, so abruptly closed in the fore-chains. Shrewd ones may also think it but natural in Billy to set about sounding some of the other impressed men of the ship in order to discover what basis, if any, there was for the emissary's obscure suggestions as to plotting disaffection aboard. Ycs, the shrewd may so think. But something more, or rather, something else than mere shrewdness is perhaps needful for the due understanding of such a character as Billy Budd's

As to Claggart, the monomania in the man—if that indeed it were—as involuntarily disclosed by starts in the manifestations detailed, yet in general covered over by his self-contained and rational demeanour, this, like a subterranean fire was eating its way deeper and deeper in him. Something decisive must come of it.

CHAPTER XVI

After the mysterious interview in the fore-chains, the one so abruptly ended there by Billy, nothing especially germane to the story occurred until the events now about to be narrated.

Elsewhere it has been said that owing to the lack of frigates (of course better sailors than line-of-battle ships) in the English squadron up the Straits at that period, the *Indomitable* was occasionally employed not only as an available substitute for a scout, but at times on detached service of more important kind. This was not alone because of her sailing qualities, not common in a ship of her rate, but quite as much, probably, that the character of her commander, it was thought, specially adapted him for any duty where, under unforeseen difficulties, a prompt initiative might have to be taken in some matter demanding knowledge and ability in addition to those qualities employed in good seamanship. It was on an expedition of the latter sort, a somewhat distant one, and when the *Indomitable* was almost at her furthest remove from the fleet, that in the latter part of an afternoon-watch she unexpectedly came in sight of a ship of the enemy. It proved to be a frigate. The latter, perceiving through the glass that the weight of men and metal would be heavily against her, invoking her light heels, crowded sail to get away. After a chase urged almost against hope, and lasting until about the middle of the first dog-watch, she signally succeeded in effecting her escape.

Not long after the pursuit had been given up, and ere the excitement incident thereto had altogether waned away, the master-at-arms, ascending from his cavernous sphere, made his appearance (cap in hand) by the mainmast respectfully awaiting the notice of Captain Vere, then solitary walking the weather-side of the quarter-deck, doubtless somewhat chafed at the failure of the pursuit. The spot where Claggart stood was the place allotted to the men of lesser grades when seeking some more particular interview either with the officer-of-the-deck or the Captain him-

self But from the latter it was not often that a sailor or petty officer of those days would seek a hearing, only some exceptional cause, would, according to established custom, have warranted that

Presently, just as the Commander, absorbed in his reflections, was on the point of turning aft in his promenade, he became sensible of Claggart's presence, and saw the doffed cap held in deferential expectancy Here be it said that Captain Vere's personal knowledge of this petty-officer had only begun at the time of the ship's last sailing from home, Claggart then for the first, in transfer from a ship detained for repairs, supplying on board the *Indomitable* the place of a previous master-at-arms disabled and ashore

No sooner did the Commander observe who it was that now so deferentially stood awaiting his notice, than a peculiar expression came over him It was not unlike that which uncontrollably will flit across the countenance of one at unawares encountering a person, who, though known to him, indeed, has hardly been long enough known for thorough knowledge but something in whose aspect nevertheless now, for the first time, provokes a vaguely repellant distaste But coming to a stand, and resuming much of his wonted official manner, save that a sort of impatience lurked in the intonation of the opening word, he said "Well? what is it, master at arms?"

With the air of a subordinate grieved at the necessity of being a messenger of ill tidings and while conscientiously determined to be frank, yet equally resolved upon shunning overstatement, Claggart at this invitation or rather summons to disburthen, spoke up What he said, conveyed in the language of no uneducated man, was to the effect following if not altogether in these words, namely, that during the chase and preparations for the possible encounter he had seen enough to convince him that at least one sailor aboard was a dangerous character in a ship mustering some who not only had taken a guilty part in the late serious trouble, but others also who, like the man in question, had entered His Majesty's service under another form than enlistment

At this point Captain Vere, with some impatience, interrupted him

"Be direct, man, say impressed men "

Claggart made a gesture of subservience and proceeded Quite lately he (Claggart) had begun to suspect that some sort of movement prompted by

the sailor in question was covertly going on, but he had not thought himself warranted in reporting the suspicion so long as it remained indistinct But from what he had that afternoon observed in the man referred to, the suspicion of something clandestine going on had advanced to a point less removed from certainty He deeply felt he added, the serious responsibility assumed in making a report involving such possible consequences to the individual mainly concerned, besides tending to augment those natural anxieties which every naval commander must feel in view of extraordinary outbreaks so recent as those which, he sorrowfully said it, it needed not to name

Now at the first broaching of the matter Captain Vere, taken by surprise, could not wholly dissemble his disquietude, but as Claggart went on, the former's aspect changed into restiveness under something in the testifier's manner in giving his testimony However, he refrained from interrupting him And Claggart, continuing, concluded with this

"God forbid, your honour, that the *Indomitable's* should be the experience of the—"

"Never mind that!" here peremptorily broke in the superior, his face alighting with anger instantly, divining the ship that the other was about to name, one in which the Nore Mutiny assumed a singularly tragical character that for a time jeopardized the life of its commander Under the circumstances he was indignant at the purposed allusion When the commissioned officers themselves were on all occasions very heedful how they referred to the recent events—for a petty-officer unnecessarily to allude to them in the presence of his captain, this struck him as a most immodest presumption Besides, to his quick sense of self respect, it even looked under the circumstances something like an attempt to alarm him Nor at that was he without some surprise that one who, so far as he had hitherto come under his notice, had shown considerable tact in his function, should in this particular evince such lack of it

But these thoughts and kindred dubious ones flitting across his mind were suddenly replaced by an intuitional surmise, which though as yet obscure in form, served practically to affect his reception of the ill tidings Certain it is that, long versed in everything pertaining to the complicated gun deck life (which like every other form of life has its secret mines and dubious side, the side popularly dis-

claimed), Captain Vere did not permit himself to be unduly disturbed by the general tenor of his subordinate's report. Furthermore, if in view of recent events prompt action should be taken at the first palpable sign of recurring insubordination, for all that, not judicious would it be, he thought, to keep the idea of lingering disaffection alive by undue forwardness in crediting an informer, even if his own subordinate, and charged among other things with police surveillance of the crew. This feeling would not perhaps have so prevailed with him were it not that upon a prior occasion the patriotic zeal officially evinced by Claggart had somewhat irritated him as appearing rather supersensible and strained. Furthermore, something even in the official's self-possessed and somewhat ostentatious manner in making his specifications strangely reminded him of a bandsman, a perjured witness in a capital case before a court-martial ashore of which when a lieutenant he, Captain Vere, had been a member.

Now the peremptory check given to Claggart in the matter of the arrested allusion was quickly followed up by this "You say that there is at least one dangerous man aboard. Name him."

"William Budd, a foretopman, your honour—"

"William Budd," repeated Captain Vere with unforged astonishment, "and mean you the man our Lieutenant Ratchffe took from the merchantman not very long ago—the young fellow who seems to be so popular with the men—Billy, the Handsome Sailor, as they call him?"

"The same, your honour; but for all his youth and good looks, a deep one. Not for nothing does he insinuate himself into the good will of his shipmates, since at the least they will at a pinch say a good word for him at all hazards. Did Lieutenant Ratchffe happen to tell your honour of that adroit fling of Budd's jumping up in the cutter's bow under the merchantman's stern when he was being taken off? It is even masqued by that sort of good-humoured air that at heart he resents his impressment. You have but noted his fair cheek. A man-trap may be under his ruddy-tipped daisies."

Now the *Handsome Sailor*, as a signal figure among the crew, had naturally enough attracted the Captain's attention from the first. Though in general not very demonstrative to his officers, he had congratulated Lieutenant Ratchffe upon his good fortune in lighting on such a fine specimen of the *genus homo*

who, in the nude, might have posed for a statue of young Adam before the fall.

As to Billy's adieu to the ship *Rights-of-Man*, which the boarding lieutenant had indeed reported to him, Captain Vere,—but in a deferential way—more as a good story than aught else,—though mistakenly understanding it as a satiric sally, had but thought so much the better of the impressed-man for it; as a military sailor, admiring the spirit that could take an arbitrary enlistment so merrily and sensibly. The foretopman's conduct, too, so far as it had fallen under the Captain's notice had confirmed the first happy augury, while the new recruit's qualities as a *sailor-man* seemed to be such that he had thought of recommending him to the executive officer for promotion to a place that would more frequently bring him under his own observation, namely, the captaincy of the mizzentop replacing there in the star-board-watch a man not so young whom partly for that reason he deemed less fitted for the post. Be it parenthesized here that since the mizzentopmen have not to handle such breadths of heavy canvas as the lower sailors on the mainmast and foremast, a young man if of the right stuff not only seems best adapted to duty there, but, in fact, is generally selected for the captaincy of that top, and the company under him are light hands, and often but strip-lings. In sum, Captain Vere had from the beginning deemed Billy Budd to be what in the naval parlance of the times was called a "*King's bargain*," that is to say, for His Britannic Majesty's navy a capital investment at small outlay or none at all.

After a brief pause during which the reminiscences above mentioned passed vividly through his mind he weighed the import of Claggart's last suggestion, conveyed in the phrase, "pitfall under the clover," and the more he weighed it the less reliance he felt in the informer's good faith. Suddenly he turned upon him: "Do you come to me, Master-at-arms, with so foggy a tale? As to Budd, cite me an act or spoken word of his confirmatory of what you here in general charge against him. Stay," drawing nearer to him, "heed what you speak. Just now and in a case like this, there is a yard-arm-end for the false witness."

"Ah, your honour!" sighed Claggart mildly shaking his shapely head as in sad deprecation of such unmerited severity of tone. Then bridling—erecting himself as in virtuous self-assertion, he circumstan-

tially alleged certain words and acts, which collectively if credited, led to presumptions mortally inculpat- ing Budd, and for some of these averments, he added, substantiating proof was not far

With grey eyes impatient and distrustful, es- saying to fathom to the bottom Claggart's calm violet ones, Captain Vere again heard him out, then for the moment stood ruminating. The mood he evinced, Claggart—himself for the time liberated from the other's scrutiny—steadily regarded with a look difficult to render—a look curious of the operation of his tactics, a look such as might have been that of the spokesman of the envious children of Jacob de- ceptively imposing upon the troubled patriarch the blood dyed coat of young Joseph

Though something exceptional in the moral qual- ity of Captain Vere made him, in earnest encounter with a fellowman, a veritable touchstone of that man's essential nature, yet now as to Claggart and what was really going on in him his feeling partook less of intuitional conviction than of strong suspicion clogged by strange dubieties. The perplexity he evinced proceeded less from aught touching the man informed against—as Claggart doubtless opined—than from consideration how best to act in regard to the informer. At first, indeed, he was naturally for summoning that substantiation of his allegations which Claggart said was at hand. But such a proceed- ing would result in the matter at once getting abroad which in the present stage of it, he thought, might undesirably affect the ship's company. If Clag- gart was a false witness,—that closed the affair. And therefore, before trying the accusation, he would first practically test the accusee, and he thought this could be done in a quiet undemonstrative way

The measure he determined upon involved a shift- ing of the scene—a transfer to a place less exposed to observation than the broad quarter deck. For although the few gun-room officers there at the time had, in due observance of naval etiquette, withdrawn to lee- ward the moment Captain Vere had begun his prom- enade on the deck's weather-side, and though during the colloquy with Claggart they of course ventured not to diminish the distance, and though throughout the interview Captain Vere's voice was far from high, and Claggart's silvery and low, and the wind in the cordage and the wash of the sea helped the more to put them beyond ear-shot, nevertheless, the inter- view's continuance already had attracted observation

from some topmen aloft, and other sailors in the waist or further forward

Having determined upon his measures, Cap- tain Vere forthwith took action. Abruptly turning to Claggart he asked, "Master at arms, is it now Budd's watch aloft?"

"No, your honour." Whereupon, "Mr Wilkes," summoning the nearest midshipman, "tell Albert to come to me." Albert was the Captain's hammock- boy, a sort of sea-valet in whose discretion and fidelity his master had much confidence. The lad appeared "You know Budd the foretopman?"

"I do, Sir."

"Go find him. It is his watch off. Manage to tell him out of ear-shot that he is wanted aft. Contrive it that he speaks to nobody. Keep him in talk your- self. And not till you get well aft here, not till then, let him know that the place where he is wanted is my cabin. You understand. Go.—Master at-arms, show yourself on the decks below, and when you think it time for Albert to be coming with his man, stand by quietly to follow the sailor in."

CHAPTER XVII

Now when the foretopman found himself closeted, as it were, in the cabin with the Captain and Clag- gart, he was surprised enough. But it was a surprise unaccompanied by apprehension or distrust. To an immature nature, essentially honest and humane, forewarning intimations of subtler danger from one's kind come tardily, if at all. The only thing that took shape in the young sailor's mind was this: "Yes, the Captain, I have always thought, looks kindly upon me. I wonder if he's going to make me his coxswain. I should like that. And maybe now he is going to ask the master-at arms about me."

"Shut the door there, sentry," said the Com- mander, "stand without and let nobody come in.— Now, master-at-arms, tell this man to his face what you told of him to me," and stood prepared to sci- entize the mutually confronting visages

With the measured step and calm collected air of an asylum physician approaching in the public hall some patient beginning to show indications of a com- ing paroxysm, Claggart deliberately advanced within short range of Billy, and mesmerically looking him in the eye, briefly recapitulated the accusation

Not at first did Billy take it in. When he did the

rose-tan of his cheek looked struck as by white leprosy. He stood like one impaled and gagged. Meanwhile the accuser's eyes, removing not as yet from the blue, dilated ones, underwent a phenomenal change, their wonted rich violet colour blurring into a muddy purple. Those lights of human intelligence losing human expression, gelidly protruding like the alien eyes of certain uncatalogued creatures of the deep.

The first mesmeric glance was one of surprised fascination, the last was the hungry lurch of the torpedo-fish.

"Speak, man!" said Captain Vere to the transfixed one, struck by his aspect even more than by Claggart's, "Speak! defend yourself." Which appeal caused but a strange, dumb gesturing and gurgling in Billy, amazement at such an accusation so suddenly sprung on inexperienced nonage, this, and it may be horror at the accuser, serving to bring out his lurking defect, and in this instance for the time intensifying it into a convulsed tongue-tie, while the intent head and entire form straining forward in an agony of ineffectual eagerness to obey the injunction to speak and defend himself, gave an expression to the face like that of a condemned vestal priestess in the moment of her being buried alive, and in the first struggle against suffocation.

Though at the time Captain Vere was quite ignorant of Billy's liability to vocal impediment he now immediately divined it, since vividly Billy's aspect recalled to him that of a bright young schoolmate of his whom he had seen struck by much the same startling impotence in the act of eagerly rising in the class to be foremost in response to a testing question put to it by the master. Going close up to the young sailor, and laying a soothing hand on his shoulder, he said, "There is no hurry, my boy. Take your time, take your time." Contrary to the effect intended, these words, so fatherly in tone, doubtless touching Billy's heart to the quick, prompted yet more violent efforts at utterance—efforts soon ending for the time in confirming the paralysis, and bringing to the face an expression which was as a crucifixion to behold. The next instant, quick as the flame from a discharged cannon at night his right arm shot out and Claggart dropped to the deck. Whether intentionally, or but owing to the young athlete's superior height, the blow had taken effect full upon the forehead, so shapely and intellectual-looking a feature in the master-at-arms; so that the body fell over lengthwise,

like a heavy plank tilted from erectness. A gasp or two and he lay motionless.

"Fated boy," breathed Captain Vere in a tone so low as to be almost a whisper. "What have you done! But here, help me."

The twain raised the felled one from the loins up into a sitting position. The spare form flexibly acquiesced, but inertly. It was like handling a dead snake. They lowered it back. Regaining erectness, Captain Vere with one hand covering his face stood to all appearance as impassive as the object at his feet. Was he absorbed in taking in all the bearings of the event, and what was best not only now at once to be done, but also in the sequel? Slowly he uncovered his face, and the effect was as if the moon, emerging from eclipse, should reappear with quite another aspect than that which had gone into hiding. The father in him, manifested towards Billy thus far in the scene, was replaced by the military disciplinarian. In his official tone he bade the foretopman retire to a stateroom aft, (pointing it out), and there remain till thence summoned. This order Billy in silence mechanically obeyed. Then, going to the cabin door where it opened on the quarter-deck, Captain Vere said to the sentry without, "Tell somebody to send Albert here." When the lad appeared his master so contrived it that he should not catch sight of the prone one. "Albert," he said to him, "tell the surgeon I wish to see him. You need not come back till called."

When the surgeon entered—a self-poised character of that grave sense and experience that hardly anything could take him aback—Captain Vere advanced to meet him, thus unconsciously interrupting his view of Claggart and interrupting the other's wonted ceremonious salutation, said, "Nay, tell me how it is with yonder man," directing his attention to the prostrate one.

The surgeon looked, and for all his self-command, somewhat started at the abrupt revelation. On Claggart's always pallid complexion, thick black blood was now oozing from mouth and ear. To the gazer's professional eyes it was unmistakably no living man that he saw.

"Is it so, then?" said Captain Vere intently watching him. "I thought it. But verify it." Whereupon the customary tests confirmed the surgeon's first glance, who now looking up in unfeigned concern, cast a look of intense inquisitiveness upon his supe-

nior But Captain Vere, with one hand to his brow, was standing motionless Suddenly, catching the surgeon's arm convulsively, he exclaimed pointing down to the body,—“It is the divine judgment of Ananias! Look!”

Disturbed by the excited manner he had never before observed in the *Indomitable's* Captain, and as yet wholly ignorant of the affair, the prudent surgeon nevertheless held his peace, only again looking an earnest interrogation as to what it was that had resulted in such a tragedy

But Captain Vere was now again motionless, standing absorbed in thought But again starting, he vehemently exclaimed—“Struck dead by an angel of God Yet the angel must hang!”

At these interjections, incoherences to the listener as yet unapprised of the antecedent events, the surgeon was profoundly discomfited But now, as recollecting himself, Captain Vere in less harsh tone briefly related the circumstances leading up to the event

“But come, we must despatch,” he added, “help me to remove him (meaning the body) to yonder compartment”—designating one opposite where the foretopman remained immured Anew disturbed by a request that, as implying a desire for secrecy, seemed unaccountably strange to him, there was nothing for the subordinate to do but comply

“Go now,” said Captain Vere, with something of his wonted manner, “Go now I shall presently call a 30 drum head court Tell the lieutenants what has happened, and tell Mr Morton”—meaning the captain of marines “And charge them to keep the matter to themselves”

Full of disquietude and misgivings, the surgeon left the cabin Was Captain Vere suddenly affected in his mind, or was it but a transient excitement brought about by so strange and extraordinary a happening? As to the drum-head court, it struck the surgeon as impolitic, if nothing more The thing to do, he thought, was to place Billy Budd in confinement, and in a way dictated by usage, and postpone further action in so extraordinary a case to such time as they should again join the squadron, and then transfer it to the Admiral He recalled the unwonted agitation of Captain Vere and his exciting exclamations so at variance with his normal manner Was he unhinged? But assuming that he was, it were not so susceptible of proof What then could he do? No more trying

situation is conceivable than that of an officer subordinated under a captain whom he suspects to be, not mad indeed, but yet not quite unaffected in his intellect To argue his order to him would be in solence To resist him would be mutiny In obedience to Captain Vere he communicated what had happened to the lieutenants and captain of marines, saying nothing as to the Captain's state They stared at him in surprise and concern Like him they seemed to think that such a matter should be reported to the Admiral

Who in the rainbow can draw the line where the violet tint ends and the orange tint begins? Distinctly we see the difference of the colour, but where exactly does the first one visibly enter into the other? So with sanity and insanity In pronounced cases there is no question about them But in some cases, in various degrees supposedly less pronounced, to draw the line of demarcation few will undertake, though for a fee some professional experts will There is nothing namable but that some men will undertake to do for pay In other words, there are instances where it is next to impossible to determine whether a man is sane or beginning to be otherwise

Whether Captain Vere, as the surgeon professionally surmised, was really the sudden victim of any degree of aberration, one must determine for himself by such light as this narrative may afford

CHAPTER XVIII

The unhappy event which has been narrated could not have happened at a worse juncture For it was close on the heel of the suppressed insurrections, an after-time very critical to naval authority, demanding from every English sea commander two qualities not readily intermixible—prudence and rigour Moreover, there was something crucial in the case

In the jugglery of circumstances preceding and attending the event on board the *Indomitable* and in the light of that martial code whereby it was formally to be judged, innocence and guilt, personified in Claggart and Budd, in effect changed places

In the legal view the apparent victim of the tragedy was he who had sought to victimize a man blameless, and the indisputable deed of the latter, navally regarded, constituted the most heinous of military crimes Yet more The essential right and wrong involved in the matter, the clearer that might

be, so much the worse for the responsibility of a loyal sea-commander, inasmuch as he was authorized to determine the matter on that primitive legal basis.

Small wonder then that the *Indomitable's* Captain, though in general a man of rigid decision, felt that circumspectness not less than promptitude was necessary. Until he could decide upon his course, and in each detail, and not only so, but until the concluding measure was upon the point of being enacted he deemed it advisable, in view of all the circumstances, to guard as much as possible against publicity. Here he may or may not have erred. Certain it is, however, that subsequently in the confidential talk of more than one or two gun-rooms and cabins he was not a little criticized by some officers, a fact imputed by his friends, and vehemently by his cousin Jack Denton, to professional jealousy of Starry Vere. Some imaginative ground for invidious comment there was. The maintenance of secrecy in the matter, the confining all knowledge of it for a time to the place where the homicide occurred—the quarter-deck cabin, in these particulars lurked some resemblance to the policy adopted in those tragedies of the palace which have occurred more than once in the capital founded by Peter the Barbarian, great chiefly by his crimes.

The case was such that fain would the *Indomitable's* Captain have deferred taking any action whatever respecting it further than to keep the foretopman a close prisoner till the ship rejoined the squadron, and then submitting the matter to the judgment of his Admiral.

But a true military officer is, in one particular, like a true monk. Not with more of self-abnegation will the latter keep his vows of monastic obedience than the former his vows of allegiance to martial duty.

Feeling that unless quick action were taken on it, the deed of the foretopman, as soon as it should be known on the gun-decks would tend to awaken any slumbering embers of the Nore among the crew, a sense of the urgency of the case overruled in Captain Vere all other considerations. But though a conscientious disciplinarian, he was no lover of authority for mere authority's sake. Very far was he from embracing opportunities for monopolizing to himself the perils of moral responsibility, none at least that could properly be referred to an official superior, or shared with him by his official equals or even subordinates. So thinking, he was glad it would not be at variance

with usage to turn the matter over to a summary court of his own officers, reserving to himself, as the one on whom the ultimate accountability would rest, the right of maintaining a supervision of it, or formally or informally interposing at need. Accordingly a drum-head court was summarily convened, he electing the individuals composing it, the First Lieutenant, the Captain of Marines, and the Sailing Master.

In associating an officer of marines with the sea-lieutenants in a case having to do with a sailor, the Commander perhaps deviated from general custom. He was prompted thereto by the circumstances that he took that soldier to be a judicious person, thoughtful and not altogether incapable of grappling with a difficult case unprecedented in his prior experience. Yet even as to him he was not without some latent misgiving, for withal he was an extremely good-natured man, an enjoyer of his dinner, a sound sleeper, and inclined to obesity. The sort of man who, though he would always maintain his manhood in battle, might not prove altogether reliable in a moral dilemma involving aught of the tragic. As to the First Lieutenant and the Sailing Master, Captain Vere could not but be aware that though honest natures, of approved gallantry upon occasion, their intelligence was mostly confined to the matter of active seamanship, and the fighting demands of their profession. The court was held in the same cabin where the unfortunate affair had taken place. This cabin, the Commander's, embraced the entire area under the poop-deck. Aft, and on either side, was a small state-room—the one room temporarily a jail, and the other a dead-house—and a yet smaller compartment leaving a space between, expanding forward into a goodly oblong of length coinciding with the ship's beam. A skylight of moderate dimension was overhead, and at each end of the oblong space were two sashed port-hole windows, easily convertible back into embrasures for short carronades.

All being quickly in readiness, Billy Budd was arraigned, Captain Vere necessarily appearing as the sole witness in the case, and as such temporarily sinking his rank, though singularly maintaining it in a matter apparently trivial, namely, that he testified from the ship's weather-side, with that object having caused the court to sit on the lee-side. Concisely he narrated all that had led up to the catastrophe, omitting nothing in Claggart's accusation and deposing as

to the manner in which the prisoner had received it. At this testimony the three officers glanced with no little surprise at Billy Budd, the last man they would have suspected, either of mutinous design alleged by Claggart, or of the undeniable deed he himself had done. The First Lieutenant, taking judicial primacy and turning towards the prisoner, said, "Captain Vere has spoken. Is it or is it not as Captain Vere says?" In response came syllables not so much impeded in the utterance as might have been anticipated. They were these:

"Captain Vere tells the truth. It is just as Captain Vere says, but it is not as the master-at-arms said. I have eaten the King's bread and I am true to the King."

"I believe you, my man," said the witness, his voice indicating a suppressed emotion not otherwise betrayed.

"God will bless you for that, your honour!" not without stammering said Billy, and all but broke down. But immediately was recalled to self control by another question, to which the same emotional difficulty of utterance came. "No, there was no malice between us. I never bore malice against the master-at-arms. I am sorry that he is dead. I did not mean to kill him. Could I have used my tongue I would not have struck him. But he foully lied to my face, and in the presence of my Captain, and I had to say something, and I could only say it with a blow. God help me!"

In the impulsive above-board manner of the frank one the court saw confirmed all that was implied in words which just previously had perplexed them, coming as they did from the testifier to the tragedy, and promptly following Billy's impassioned disclaimer of mutinous intent—Captain Vere's words, "I believe you, my man."

Next it was asked of him whether he knew of or suspected aught savouring of incipient trouble (meaning a mutiny, though the explicit term was avoided) going on in any section of the ship's company.

The reply lingered. This was naturally imputed by the court to the same vocal embarrassment which had retarded or obstructed previous answers. But in main it was otherwise here, the question immediately recalling to Billy's mind the interview with the after-guardsmen in the fore-chains. But an innate repugnance to playing a part at all approaching that of an informer against one's own shipmates—the same

erring sense of uninstructed honour which had stood in the way of his reporting the matter at the time though as a loyal man of war's man it was incumbent on him and failure so to do charged against him and, proven, would have subjected him to the heaviest of penalties, this, with the blind feeling now his, that nothing really was being hatched, prevailing with him. When the answer came it was a negative.

"One question more," said the officer of marines now first speaking and with a troubled earnestness. "You tell us that what the master-at-arms said against you was a lie. Now why should he have so lied, so maliciously lied, since you declare there was no malice between you?"

At that question unintentionally touching on a spiritual sphere wholly obscure to Billy's thoughts, he was nonplussed, evincing a confusion indeed that some observers, such as can be imagined, would have construed into involuntary evidence of hidden guilt. Nevertheless he strove some way to answer, but all at once relinquished the vain endeavour, at the same time turning an appealing glance towards Captain Vere as deeming him his best helper and friend. Captain Vere, who had been seated for a time, rose to his feet, addressing the interrogator. "The question you put to him comes naturally enough. But can he rightly answer it?—or anybody else? unless indeed it be he who lies within there," designating the compartment where lay the corpse. "But the prone one there will not rise to our summons. In effect though, as it seems to me, the point you make is hardly material. Quite aside from any conceivable motive actuating the master-at-arms, and irrespective of the provocation of the blow, a martial court must needs in the present case confine its attention to the blow's consequence, which consequence is to be deemed not otherwise than as the striker's deed!"

This utterance, the full significance of which it was not at all likely that Billy took in, nevertheless caused him to turn a wistful, interrogative look towards the speaker, a look in its dumb expressiveness not unlike that which a dog of generous breed might turn upon his master, seeking in his face some elucidation of a previous gesture ambiguous to the canine intelligence. Nor was the same utterance without marked effect upon the three officers, more especially the soldier. Couched in it seemed to them a meaning unanticipated, involving a prejudgment on the speak-

er's part. It served to augment a mental disturbance previously evident enough

The soldier once more spoke, in a tone of suggestive dubiety addressing at once his associates and Captain Vere "Nobody is present—none of the ship's company, I mean, who might shed lateral light, if any is to be had, upon what remains mysterious in this matter"

"That is thoughtfully put," said Captain Vere. "I see your drift. Ay, there is a mystery but to use a Scriptural phrase, it is 'a mystery of iniquity,' a matter for only psychologic theologians to discuss. But what has a military court to do with it? Not to add that for us any possible investigation of it is cut off by the lasting tongue-tie of him in yonder," again designating the mortuary state-room "The prisoner's deed. With that alone we have to do."

To this, and particularly the closing reiteration, the marine soldier, knowing not how aptly to reply, sadly abstained from saying aught. The First Lieutenant, who at the outset had not unnaturally assumed primacy in the court, now overrulingly instructed by a glance from Captain Vere, a glance more effective than words, resumed that primacy. Turning to the prisoner "Budd," he said, and scarce in equable tones, "Budd, if you have aught further to say for yourself, say it now."

Upon this the young sailor turned another quick glance towards Captain Vere; then, as taking a hint from that aspect, a hint confirming his own instinct³⁰ that silence was now best, replied to the Lieutenant, "I have said all, Sir"

The marine—the same who had been the sentinel without the cabin-door at the time that the foretopman, followed by the master-at-arms, entered it—he, standing by the sailor throughout their judicial proceedings, was now directed to take him back to the after compartment originally assigned to the prisoner and his custodian. As the twain disappeared from view, the three officers, as partially liberated from some inward constraint associated with Bill's mere presence, simultaneously stirred in their seats. They exchanged looks of troubled indecision, yet feeling that decide they must, and without long delay; for Captain Vere was for the time sitting unconsciously with his back towards them, apparently in one of his absent fits, gazing out from a sashed port-hole to windward upon the monotonous blank of the twilight sea. But the court's silence continuing, broken

only at moments by brief consultations in low earnest tones, this seemed to assure him and encourage him. Turning, he to-and-fro paced the cabin athwart; in the returning ascent to windward, climbing the slant deck in the ship's lee roll, without knowing its symbolizing thus in his action a mind resolute to surmount difficulties even if against primitive instincts strong as the wind and the sea. Presently he came to a stand before the three. After scanning their faces he stood less as mustering his thoughts for expression, than as one deliberating how best to put them to well-meaning men not intellectually mature, men with whom it was necessary to demonstrate certain principles that were axioms to himself. Similar impatience as to talking is perhaps one reason that deters some minds from addressing any popular assemblies; under which head is to be classed most legislatures in a Democracy.

When speak he did, something both in the substance of what he said and his manner of saying it showed the influence of unshared studies, modifying and tempering the practical training of an active career. This, along with his phraseology now and then, was suggestive of the grounds whereon rested that imputation of a certain pedantry socially alleged against him by certain naval men of wholly practical cast, captains who nevertheless would frankly concede that His Majesty's navy mustered no more efficient officers of their grade than "*Starry Vere*"

What he said was to this effect: "Hitherto I have been but the witness, little more, and I should hardly think now to take another tone, that of your coadjutor, for the time, did I not perceive in you—at the crisis too—a troubled hesitancy, proceeding, I doubt not, from the clashing of military duty with moral scruple—scruple vitalized by compassion. For the compassion, how can I otherwise but share it. But, mindful of paramount obligation, I strive against scruples that may tend to enervate decision. Not, gentlemen, that I hide from myself that the case is an exceptional one. Speculatively regarded, it well might be referred to a jury of casuists. But for us here, acting not as casuists or moralists, it is a case practical and under martial law practically to be dealt with

"But your scruples! Do they move as in a dusk? Challenge them. Make them advance and declare themselves. Come now: do they import something like this: If, mindless of palliating circumstances, we are bound to regard the death of the master-at-arms

as the prisoner's deed, then does that deed constitute a capital crime whereof the penalty is a mortal one? But in natural justice is nothing but the prisoner's overt act to be considered? Now can we adjudge to summary and shameful death a fellow creature innocent before God, and whom we feel to be so?—Does that state it aught? You sign sad assent. Well, I, too, feel that, the full force of that. It is Nature. But do these buttons that we wear attest that our allegiance is to Nature? No, to the King. Though the ocean, which is inviolate Nature primeval, though this be the element where we move and have our being as sailors, yet as the King's officers lies our duty in a sphere correspondingly natural? So little is that true, that in receiving our commissions we in the most important regards ceased to be natural free-agents. When war is declared, are we the commissioned fighters previously consulted? We fight at command. If our judgments approve the war, that is but coincidence. So in other particulars. So now, would it be so much we ourselves that would condemn as it would be martial law operating through us? For that law and the rigour of it, we are not responsible. Our vowed responsibility is in this. That however pitilessly that law may operate, we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it.

"But the exceptional in the matter moves the heart within you. Even so, too, is mine moved. But let not warm hearts betray heads that should be cool. Ashore in a criminal case will an upright judge allow himself 30 off the bench to be waylaid by some tender kinswoman of the accused seeking to touch him with her tearful plea? Well, the heart here is as that piteous woman. The heart is the feminine in man, and hard though it be, she must here be ruled out."

He paused, earnestly studying them for a moment, then resumed.

"But something in your aspect seems to urge that it is not solely that heart that moves in you, but also the conscience, the private conscience. Then, tell me 40 whether or not, occupying the position we do, private conscience should not yield to that imperial one formulated in the code under which alone we officially proceed?"

Here the three men moved in their seats, less convinced than agitated by the course of an argument troubling but the more the spontaneous conflict within. Perceiving which, the speaker paused for a moment, then abruptly changing his tone, went on

"To steady us a bit, let us recur to the facts.—In war-time at sea a man of war's man strikes his superior in grade, and the blow kills. Apart from its effect, the blow itself is, according to the Articles of War, a capital crime. Furthermore—"

"Ay, Sir," emotionally broke in the officer of marines, "in one sense it was. But surely Budd purposed neither mutiny nor homicide."

"Surely not, my good man. And before a court less 10 arbitrary and more merciful than a martial one that plea would largely attenuate. At the Last Assizes it shall acquit. But how here? We proceed under the law of the Mutiny Act. In future no child can resemble his father more than that Act resembles in spirit the thing from which it derives—War. In His Majesty's service—in this ship indeed—there are Englishmen forced to fight for the King against their will. Against their conscience, for aught we know. Though as their fellow creatures some of us may appreciate their position, yet as Navy Officers, what 20 reck we of it? Still less reck the enemy. Our impressed men he would fain cut down in the same swath with our volunteers. As regards the enemy's naval conscripts, some of whom may even share our own abhorrence of the regicidal French Directory, it is the same on our side. War looks but to the frontage, the appearance. And the Mutiny Act, War's child, takes after the father. Budd's intent or non-intent is nothing to the purpose."

"But while, put to it by those anxieties in you which I cannot but respect, I only repeat myself—while thus strangely we prolong proceedings that should be summary, the enemy may be sighted and an engagement result. We must do, and one of two things must we do—condemn or let go."

"Can we not convict and yet mitigate the penalty?" asked the Junior Lieutenant here speaking, and falteringly, for the first.

"Lieutenant, were that clearly lawful for us under the circumstances, consider the consequences of such clemency. The people" (meaning the ship's company) "have native sense, most of them are familiar with our naval usage and tradition, and how would they take it? Even could you explain to them—which our official position forbids—they, long moulded by arbitrary discipline, have not that kind of intelligent responsiveness that might qualify them to comprehend and discriminate. No, to the people the foretopman's deed, however it be worded in the an-

nouncement, will be plain homicide committed in a flagrant act of mutiny. What penalty for that should follow, they know. But it does not follow. *Why?* they will ruminate. You know what sailors are. Will they not revert to the recent outbreak at the *Nore*? Ay, they know the well-founded alarm—the panic it struck throughout England. Your clement sentence they would account pusillanimous. They would think that we flinch, that we are afraid of them—afraid of practising a lawful rigour singularly demanded at this juncture lest it should provoke new troubles. What shame to us such a conjecture on their part, and how deadly to discipline. You see then whither, prompted by duty and the law, I steadfastly drive. But I beseech you, my friends, do not take me amiss. I feel as you do for this unfortunate boy. But did he know our hearts, I take him to be of that generous nature that he would feel even for us on whom in this military necessity so heavy a compulsion is laid.”

With that, crossing the deck, he resumed his place by the sashed port-hole, tacitly leaving the three to come to a decision. On the cabin's opposite side the troubled court sat silent. Loyal lieges, plain and practical, though at bottom they dissented from some points Captain Vere had put to them, they were without the faculty, hardly had the inclination to gainsay one whom they felt to be an earnest man, one too not less their superior in mind than in naval rank. But it is not improbable that even such of his words as were not without influence over them, less came home to them than his closing appeal to their instinct as sea-officers, in the forethought he threw out as to the practical consequences to discipline (considering the unconfirmed tone of the fleet at the time)—should a man-of-war's man's violent killing at sea of a superior in grade be allowed to pass for aught else than a capital crime, demanding prompt infliction of the penalty?

Not unlikely they were brought to something more or less akin to that harassed frame of mind which in the year 1842 actuated the commander of the U.S. brig-of-war *Somers* to resolve (under the so-called Articles of War—Articles modelled upon the English Mutiny Act) to resolve upon the execution at sea of a midshipman and two petty-officers as mutineers designing the seizure of the brig. Which resolution was carried out, though in a time of peace and within not many days' sail of home. An act vindicated by a naval court of inquiry subsequently convened ashore. His-

tory, and here cited without comment. True, the circumstances on board the *Somers* were different from those on board the *Indomitable*. But the urgency felt, well-warranted or otherwise, was much the same.

Says a writer whom few know, “Forty years after a battle it is easy for a non-combatant to reason about how it ought to have been fought. It is another thing personally and under fire to direct the fighting while involved in the obscuring smoke of it. Much so with respect to other emergencies involving considerations both practical and moral, and when it is imperative promptly to act. The greater the fog, the more it imperils the steamer, and speed is put on though at the hazard of running somebody down. Little were the snug card-players in the cabin of the responsibilities of the sleepless man on the bridge.”

In brief, Billy Budd was formally convicted and sentenced to be hung at the yard-arm in the early morning-watch, it being now night. Otherwise, as is customary in such cases, the sentence would forthwith have been carried out. In war-time on the field or in the fleet, a mortal punishment decreed by a drum-head court—on the field sometimes decreed by but a nod from the general—follows without a delay on the heel of conviction without appeal.

CHAPTER XIX

It was Captain Vere himself who, of his own motion, communicated the finding of the court to the prisoner, for that purpose going to the compartment where he was in custody, and bidding the marine there to withdraw for the time.

Beyond the communication of the sentence, what took place at this interview was never known. But, in view of the character of the twain briefly closeted in that state-room, each radically sharing in the rarer qualities of one nature—so rare, indeed, as to be all but incredible to average minds however much cultivated—some conjectures may be ventured.

It would have been in consonance with the spirit of our Captain Vere should he on this occasion have concealed nothing from the condemned one—should he indeed have frankly disclosed to him the part he himself had played in bringing about the decision, at the same time revealing his actuating motives. On Billy's side it is not improbable that such a confession would have been received in much the same spirit that prompted it. Not without a sort of joy indeed he might have appreciated the brave opinion of him

implied in his Captain making such a confidant of him. Nor as to the sentence itself could he have been insensible that it was imputed to him as to one not afraid to die. Even more may have been Captain Vere in the end may have developed the passion sometimes latent under an exterior stoical or indifferent. He was old enough to have been Billy's father. The austere devotee of military duty, letting himself melt back into what remains primeval in our formalized humanity, may in the end have caught Billy to his heart even as Abraham may have caught young Isaac on the brink of resolutely offering him up in obedience to the exacting behest. But there is no telling the sacrament—seldom if in any case revealed to the gadding world wherever under circumstances at all akin to those here attempted to be set forth—two of great Nature's nobler order embrace. There is privacy at the time, inviolable to the survivor, and holy oblivion (the sequel to each diviner magnanimity) providentially covers all at last.

The first to encounter Captain Vere in the act of leaving the compartment was the Senior Lieutenant. The face he beheld, for the moment one expressive of the agony of the strong, was to that officer, though a man of fifty, a startling revelation. That the condemned one suffered less than he who mainly had effected the condemnation was apparently indicated by the former's exclamation in the scene soon perforce to be touched upon.

Of a series of incidents within a brief term rapidly following each other, the adequate narration may take up a term less brief, especially if explanation or comment here and there seem requisite to the better understanding of such incidents. Between the entrance into the cabin of him who never left it alive, and him who when he did leave it left it as one condemned to die, between this and the closeted interview just given, less than an hour and a half had elapsed. It was an interval long enough, however, to awaken speculations among no few of the ship's company as to what it was that could be detaining in the cabin the master-at-arms and the sailor, for it was rumoured that both of them had been seen to enter it and neither of them had been seen to emerge. This rumour had got abroad upon the gun-decks and in the tops, the people of a great war-ship being in one respect like villagers, taking microscopic note of every untoward movement or non-movement going on. When therefore in weather not at all tempestuous

all hands were called in the second dog watch, a summons under such circumstances not usual in those hours the crew were not wholly unprepared for some announcement extraordinary one having connection, too, with the continued absence of the two men from their wonted haunts.

There was a moderate sea at the time, and the moon, newly risen and near to being at its full, silvered the white spar deck wherever not blotted by the clear cut shadows horizontally thrown of fixtures and moving men. On either side of the quarter-deck the marine guard under arms was drawn up, and Captain Vere, standing in his place surrounded by all the ward room officers, addressed his men. In so doing his manner showed neither more nor less than that properly pertaining to his supreme position aboard his own ship. In clear terms and concise he told them what had taken place in the cabin, that the master at arms was dead, that he who had killed him had been already tried by a summary court and condemned to death, and that the execution would take place in the early morning watch. The word *mutiny* was not named in what he said. He refrained, too, from making the occasion an opportunity for any preaching as to the maintenance of discipline, thinking, perhaps, that under existing circumstances in the navy the consequence of violating discipline should be made to speak for itself.

Their Captain's announcement was listened to by the throng of standing sailors in a dumbness like that of a seated congregation of believers in Hell listening to the clergyman's announcement of his Calvinistic text.

At the close, however, a confused murmur went up. It began to wax. All but instantly, then, as a sign, was pierced and suppressed by shrill whistles of the boatswain and his mates piping "Down one watch."

To be prepared for burial Claggart's body was delivered to certain petty-officers of his mess. And here, not to clog the sequel with lateral matters, it may be added that at a suitable hour, the master-at-arms was committed to the sea with every funeral honour properly belonging to his naval grade.

In this proceeding, as in every public one growing out of the tragedy, strict adherence to usage was observed. Nor in any point could it have been at all deviated from, either with respect to Claggart or Billy Budd, without begetting undesirable speculations in the ship's company, the sailors, and more

particularly the men-of-war's men, being of all men the greatest sticklers for usage.

For similar cause all communication between Captain Vere and the condemned one ended with the closeted interview already given, the latter being now surrendered to the ordinary routine preliminary to the end. This transfer under guard from the Captain's quarters was effected without unusual precautions—at least no visible ones.

If possible, not to let the men so much as surmise¹⁰ that their officers anticipate aught amiss from them is the tacit rule in a military ship. And the more that some sort of trouble should really be apprehended, the more do the officers keep that apprehension to themselves, though not the less unostentatious vigilance may be augmented.

In the present instance the sentry placed over the prisoner had strict orders to let no one have communication with him but the Chaplain. And certain unobtrusive measures were taken absolutely to insure²⁰ this point.

CHAPTER XX

In a seventy-four of the old order the deck known at the upper gun-deck was the one covered over by the spar-deck, which last, though not without its armament, was for the most part exposed to the weather. In general it was at all hours free from hammocks; those of the crew swinging on the lower gun-deck, and berth-deck, the latter being not only a dormitory³⁰ but also the place for the stowing of the sailors' bags, and on both sides lined with the large chests or movable pantries of the many messes of the men.

On the starboard side of the *Indomitable's* upper gun-deck, behold Billy Budd under sentry lying prone in irons in one of the bays formed by the regular spacing of the guns comprising the batteries on either side. All these pieces were of the heavier calibre of that period. Mounted on lumbering wooden carriages, they were hampered with cumbersome harness of⁴⁰ breeching and strong side-tackles for running them out. Guns and carriages, together with the long rammers and shorter lint-stocks lodged in loops overhead—all these, as customary, were painted black, and the heavy hempen breechings, tarred to the same tint, wore the like livery of the undertakers. In contrast with the funereal tone of these surrounding the prone sailor's exterior apparel, white *jumper* and white duck trousers, each more or less soiled, dimly

glimmered in the obscure light of the bay like a patch of discoloured snow in early April lingering at some upland cave's black mouth. In effect he is already in his shroud or the garments that shall serve him in lieu of one. Over him, but scarce illuminating him, two battle-lanterns swing from two massive beams of the deck above. Fed with the oil supplied by the war-contractors (whose gains, honest or otherwise, are in every land an anticipated portion of the harvest of death), with flickering splashes of dirty yellow light they pollute the pale moonshine all but ineffectually struggling in obstructed flecks through the open ports from which the tompioned cannon protrude. Other lanterns at intervals serve but to bring out somewhat the obscurer bays which, like small confessionals or side-chapels in a cathedral, branch from the long, dim-vistaed, broad aisle between the two batteries of that covered tier.

Such was the deck where now lay the Handsome Sailor. Through the rose-tan of his complexion, no pallor could have shown. It would have taken days of sequestration from the winds and the sun to have brought about the effacement of that young sea-bloom. But the skeleton in the cheek-bone at the point of its angle was just beginning delicately to be defined under the warm-tinted skin. In fervid hearts self-contained some brief experiences devour our human tissue as secret fire in a ship's hold consumes cotton in the bale.

But now, lying between the two guns, as nipped in the vice of fate, Billy's agony, mainly proceeding from a generous young heart's virgin experience of the diabolical incarnate and effective in some men—the tension of that agony was over now. It survived not the something healing in the closeted interview with Captain Vere. Without movement, he lay as in a trance, that adolescent expression previously noted as his, taking on something akin to the look of a slumbering child in the cradle when the warm hearth-glow of the still chamber of night plays on the dimples that at whiles mysteriously form in the cheek, silently coming and going there. For now and then in the gyved one's trance, a serene happy light born of some wandering reminiscence or dream would diffuse itself over his face, and then wane away only anew to return.

The Chaplain coming to see him and finding him thus, and perceiving no sign that he was conscious of his presence, attentively regarded him for a space,

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The Chaplain coming to see him and finding him thus, and perceiving no sign that he was conscious of his presence, attentively regarded him for a space,

then slipping aside, withdrew for the time, peradventure feeling that even he, the minister of Christ, though receiving his stipend from wars, had no consolation to proffer which could result in a peace transcending that which he beheld. But in the small hours he came again. And the prisoner, now awake to his surroundings, noticed his approach, and civilly, all but cheerfully, welcomed him. But it was to little purpose that in the interview following the good man sought to bring Billy Budd to some godly understanding that he must die, and at dawn True, Billy himself freely referred to his death as a thing close at hand, but it was something in the way that children will refer to death in general, who yet among their other sports will play a funeral with hearse and mourners. Not that like children Billy was incapable of conceiving what death really is. No, but he was wholly without irrational fear of it, a fear more prevalent in highly civilized communities than those so called barbarous ones which in all respects stand nearer to unadulterate Nature. And, as elsewhere said, a barbarian Billy radically was, as much so, for all the costume, as his countrymen the British captives, living trophies made to march in the Roman triumph of Germanicus. Quite as much so as those later barbarians, young men probably, and picked specimens among the earlier British converts to Christianity, at least nominally such, and taken to Rome (as to day converts from lesser isles of the sea may be taken to London), of whom the Pope of that time, admiring the strangeness of their personal beauty so unlike the Italian stamp, their clear, ruddy complexions and curled flaxen locks, explained, "Angles" (meaning *English* the modern derivative) "Angels do you call them? And is it because they look so like *angels*?" Had it been later in time one would think that the Pope had in mind Fra Angelico's seraphs, some of whom, plucking apples in gardens of Hesperides, have the faint rose-bud complexion of the more beautiful English girls.

CHAPTER XXI

If in vain the good Chaplain sought to impress the young barbarian with ideas of death akin to those conveyed in the skull, dial and cross-bones on old tomb stones, equally futile to all appearances were his efforts to bring home to him the thought of salvation and a Saviour. Billy listened, but less out of awe or reverence, perhaps, than from a certain natural polite-

ness, doubtless at bottom regarding all that in much the same way that most mariners of his class take any discourse abstract or out of the common tone of the workaday world. And this sailor way of taking clerical discourse is not wholly unlike the way in which the pioneer of Christianity—full of transcendent miracles—was received long ago on tropic isles by any superior *savage* so called. A Tahitian say of Captain Cook's time or shortly after that time. Out of natural courtesy he received but did not appreciate. It was like a gift placed in the palm of an outstretched hand upon which the fingers do not close.

But the *Indomitable's* Chaplain was a discreet man possessing the good sense of a good heart. So he insisted not in his vocation here. At the instance of Captain Vere, a lieutenant had apprised him of pretty much of everything as to Billy, and since he felt that innocence was even a better thing than religion wherewith to go to judgment, he reluctantly withdrew, but in his emotion not without performing an act strange enough in an Englishman, and under the circumstances yet more so in any regular priest. Stooping over, he kissed on the fair cheek his fellowman, a felon in martial law, one who, though in the confines of death, he felt he could never convert to a dogma, nor for all that did he fear for his future.

Marvel not that, having been made acquainted with the young sailor's essential innocence, the worthy man lifted not a finger to avert the doom of such martyr to martial discipline. So to do would not only have been as idle as invoking the desert, but would also have been an audacious transgression of the bounds of his function—one as exactly prescribed to him by military law as that of the boatswain or any other naval officer. Bluntly put, a chaplain is the minister of the Prince of Peace serving in the host of the God of War—Mars. As such, he is as incongruous as a musket would be on the altar at Christmas. Why then is he there? Because he indirectly subscribes the purpose attested by the cannon, because, too, he lends the sanction of the religion of the meek to that which practically is the abrogation of everything but force.⁴²

CHAPTER XXII

The night so luminous on the spar-deck, but otherwise on the cavernous ones below—levels so very

⁴² Melville notes on this passage "An irruption of heretic thought hard to suppress [Weaver's note]"

like the tiered galleries in a coal-mine—the luminous night passed away Like the prophet in the chariot disappearing in heaven and dropping his mantle to Elisha, the withdrawing night transferred its pale robe to the peeping day A meek shy light appeared in the East, where stretched a diaphanous fleece of white furrowed vapour That light slowly waxed Suddenly *one bell* was struck aft, responded to by one louder metallic stroke from forward It was four o'clock in the morning Instantly the silver whistles 10 were heard summoning all hands to witness punishment Up through the great hatchway rimmed with racks of heavy shot, the watch below came pouring, overspreading with the watch already on deck the space between the mainmast and foremast, including that occupied by the capacious *launch* and the black booms tiered on either side of it, boat and booms making a summit of observation for the powder boys and younger tars A different group comprising one watch of topmen leaned over the side of the rail of 20 that sea-balcony, no small one in a seventy-four, looking down on the crowd below. Man or boy, none spake but in whisper, and few spake at all Captain Vere—as before, the central figure among the assembled commissioned officers—stood nigh the break of the poop-deck, facing forward Just below him on the quarter-deck the marines in full equipment were drawn up much as at the scene of the promulgated sentence

At sea in the old time, the execution by halter of 30 a military sailor was generally from the fore-yard In the present instance for special reasons the main-yard was assigned. Under an arm of that yard the prisoner was presently brought up, the Chaplain attending him. It was noted at the time, and remarked upon afterwards, that in this final scene the good man evinced little or nothing of the perfunctory Brief speech indeed he had with the condemned one, but the genuine Gospel was less on his tongue than in his aspect and manner towards him The final prep- 40 arations personal to the latter being speedily brought to an end by two boatswain's-mates, the consummation impended. Billy stood facing aft. At the penultimate moment, his words, his only ones, words wholly unobstructed in the utterance, were these—"God bless Captain Vere!" Syllables so unanticipated coming from one with the ignominious hemp about his neck—a conventional felon's benediction directed aft towards the quarters of honour, syllables, too, de-

livered in the clear melody of a singing-bird on the point of launching from the twig, had a phenomenal effect, not unenhanced by the rare personal beauty of the young sailor, spiritualized now through late experiences so poignantly profound

Without volition, as it were, as if indeed the ship's populace were the vehicles of some vocal electric, with one voice, from aloft and aloft, came a resonant echo—"God bless Captain Vere!" And yet, at that instant, Billy alone must have been in their hearts, even as he was in their eyes

At the pronounced words and the spontaneous echo that voluminously rebounded them, Captain Vere, either through stoic self-control or a sort of momentary paralysis induced by emotional shock, stood erectly rigid as a musket in the ship-armour's rack

The hull, deliberately recovering from the periodic roll to leeward, was just regaining an even keel when the last signal, the preconcerted dumb one, was given At the same moment it chanced that the vapoury fleece hanging low in the east was shot through with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision and simultaneously therewith, watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces, Billy ascended, and ascending, took the full rose of the dawn

In the pinioned figure, arrived at the yard-end, to the wonder of all no motion was apparent save that created by the slow roll of the hull, in moderate weather so majestic in a great ship heavy-cannoned.

A DIGRESSION

When, some days afterwards, in reference to the singularity just mentioned, the Purser (a rather ruddy, rotund person, more accurate as an accountant than profound as a philosopher) said at mess to the Surgeon, "What testimony to the force lodged in will-power," the latter, spare and tall, one in whom a discreet causticity went along with a manner less genial than polite, replied, "Your pardon, Mr. Purser. In a hanging scientifically conducted—and, under special orders, I myself directed how Budd's was to be effected—any movement following the completed suspension and originating in the body suspended, such movement indicates mechanical spasm in the muscular system. Hence the absence of that is no more attributable to will-power, as you call it, than to horse-power—begging your pardon."

"But this muscular spasm you speak of—is not that, in a degree, more or less invariable in these cases?"

"Assuredly so, Mr Purser"

"How then my good Sir, do you account for its absence in this instance?"

"Mr Purser, it is clear that your sense of the singularity in this matter equals not mine. You account for it by what you call will power, a term not yet included in the lexicon of science. As for me, I do not with my present knowledge pretend to account for it at all. Even should one assume the hypothesis that, at the first touch of the halyards, the action of Budd's heart, intensified by extraordinary emotion at its climax, abruptly stopped—much like a watch when in carelessly winding it up you strain at the finish, thus snapping the chain—even under that hypothesis, how account for the phenomenon that followed?"

"You admit, then, that the absence of spasmodic movement was phenomenal?"

"It was phenomenal, Mr Purser, in the sense that it was an appearance, the cause of which is not immediately to be assigned"

"But tell me, my dear Sir," pertinaciously continued the other, "was the man's death effected by the halter, or was it a species of euthanasia?"

"*Euthanasia*, Mr Purser, is something like your will power, I doubt its authenticity as a scientific term—begging your pardon again. It is at once imaginative and metaphysical, in short, Greek. But," abruptly changing his tone, "there is a case in the sick-bay which I do not care to leave to my assistants. Beg your pardon, but excuse me." And rising from the mess he formally withdrew

CHAPTER XXIII

The silence at the moment of execution, and for a moment or two continuing thereafter (but emphasized by the regular wash of the sea against the hull, or the flutter of a sail caused by the helmsman's eyes being tempted astray), this emphasized silence was gradually disturbed by a sound not easily to be here verbally rendered. Whoever has heard the freshet-wave of a torrent suddenly swelled by pouring showers in tropical mountains, showers not shared by the plain, whoever has heard the first muffled murmur of its sloping advance through precipitous woods may form some conception of the sound now heard. The seeming remoteness of its source was because of its murmurous indistinctness, since it came from close

by, even from the men massed on the ship's open deck. Being inarticulate, it was dubious in significance further in that it seemed to indicate some capricious revulsion of thought or feeling such as mobs ashore are liable to—in the present instance possibly implying a sullen revocation on the men's part of their involuntary echoing of Billy's benediction. But ere the murmur had time to wax into clamour it was met by a strategic command, the more telling that it came with abrupt unexpectedness.

"Pipe down the starboard-watch, Boatswain, and see that they go."

Shrill as the shriek of the sea-hawk the whistles of the boatswain and his mates pierced that ominous low sound, dissipating it, and yielding to the mechanism of discipline the throng was thinned by one half. For the remainder most of them were set to temporary employments connected with trimming the yards and so forth, business readily to be found upon occasion by any officer of the deck.

Now each proceeding that follows a mortal sentence pronounced at sea by a drum head court is characterized by a promptitude not perceptibly merging into hurry, though bordering that. The hammock—the one which had been Billy's bed when alive, having already been ballasted with shot and otherwise prepared to serve for his canvas coffin—the last offices of the sea-undertakers, the sail-maker's mates, were now speedily completed. When everything was in readiness, a second call for all hands, made necessary by the strategic movement before mentioned, was sounded, and now to witness burial.

The details of this closing formality it needs not to give. But when the tilted plank let slide its freight into the sea, a second strange human murmur was heard—blended now with another so inarticulate sound proceeding from certain larger sea-fowl, whose attention having been attracted by the peculiar commotion in the water resulting from the heavy sloped dive of the shotted hammock into the sea, flew screaming to the spot. So near the hull did they come, that the stridor or bony creak of their gaunt double-jointed pinions was audible. As the ship under light airs passed on, leaving the burial spot astern, they still kept circling it low down with the moving shadow of their outstretched wings and the cracked requiem of their cries.

Upon sailors as superstitious as those of the age preceding ours, all men-of-war's men, too, who had

just beheld the prodigy of repose in the form suspended in air and now foundering in the deeps; to such mariners the action of the sea-fowl, though dictated by a mere animal greed for prey, was big with no prosaic significance. An uncertain movement began among them, in which some encroachment was made. It was tolerated but for a moment. For suddenly the drum beat to quarters which familiar sound, happening at least twice every day, had upon the present occasion some signal peremptoriness in it. True martial discipline long continued superinduces in an average man a sort of impulse of docility, whose operation at the official tone of command much resembles in its promptitude the effect of an instinct.

The drum-beat dissolved the multitude, distributing most of them along the batteries of the two covered gun-decks. There, as wont, the gun crews stood by their respective cannon erect and silent. In due course the First Officer, sword under arm and standing in his place on the quarter-deck, formally received the successive reports of the sworded lieutenants commanding the sections of batteries below; the last of which reports being made, the summed report he delivered with the customary salute to the Commander. All of this occupied time, which, in the present case, was the object of beating to quarters at an hour prior to the customary one. That such variance from usage was authorized by an officer like Captain Vere, a martinet as some deemed him, was evidence of the necessity for unusual action implied in what he deemed to be temporarily the mood of his men. "With mankind," he would say, "forms, measured forms, are everything, and that is the import couched in the story of Orpheus, with his lyre, spell-binding the wild denizens of the woods." And this he once applied to the disruption of forms going on across the Channel and the consequence thereof.

At this unwonted muster at quarters, all proceeded as at the regular hour. The band on the quarter-deck played a sacred air. After which the Chaplain went through with the customary morning service. That done, the drum beat the retreat, and toned by music and religious rites subserving the discipline and purpose of war, the men in their wonted orderly manner dispersed to the places allotted them when not at the guns.

And now it was full day. The fleece of low-hanging vapour had vanished, licked up by the sun that late had so glorified it. And the circumambient air in the

clearness of its serenity was like smooth white marble in the polished block not yet removed from the marble-dealer's yard.

CHAPTER XXIV

The symmetry of form attainable in pure fiction cannot so readily be achieved in a narration essentially having less to do with fable than with fact. Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges, hence the conclusion of such a narration is apt to be less finished than an architectural finial.

How it fared with the Handsome Sailor during the year of the great mutiny has been faithfully given. But though properly the story ends with his life, something in way of a sequel will not be amiss. Three brief chapters will suffice.

In the general re-christening under the Directory of the craft originally forming the navy of the French Monarchy, the *St Louis* line-of-battle ship was named the *Athéiste*. Such a name, like some other substituted ones in the Revolutionary fleet, while proclaiming the infidel audacity of the ruling power, was yet, though not so intended to be, the aptest name, if one consider it, ever given to a war-ship, far more so indeed, than the *Devastation* or the *Erebus* (the Hell) and similar names bestowed upon fighting ships.

On the return passage to the full English fleet from the detached cruise during which occurred the events already recorded, the *Indomitable* fell in with the *Athéiste*. An engagement ensued, during which Captain Vere, in the act of putting his ship alongside the enemy with a view of throwing his boarders across the bulwarks, was hit by a musket-ball from a port-hole of the enemy's main cabin. More than disabled, he dropped to the deck and was carried below to the same cock-pit where some of his men already lay. The Senior Lieutenant took command. Under him the enemy was finally captured, and though much crippled was by rare good fortune successfully taken into Gibraltar, an English fort not very distant from the scene of the fight. There Captain Vere with the rest of the wounded was put ashore. He lingered for some days, but the end came. Unhappily he was cut off too early for the Nile and Trafalgar. The spirit that, in spite of its philosophic austerity, may yet have indulged in the most secret of all passions, ambition, never attained to the fulness of fame.

Not long before death, while lying under the influence of that magical drug which, in soothing the physical frame, mysteriously operates on the subtler element in man, he was heard to murmur words in explicable to his attendant—"Billy Budd, Billy Budd." That these were not the accents of remorse, would seem clear from what the attendant said to the *Indomitable's* senior officer of marines, who, as the most reluctant to condemn of the members of the drum-head court, too well knew (though here he ¹⁰ kept the knowledge to himself) who Billy Budd was

CHAPTER XXV

Some few weeks after the execution, among other matters under the main head of *News from the Mediterranean*, there appeared in a naval chronicle of the time, an authorized weekly publication, an account of the affair. It was doubtless for the most part written in good faith, though the medium, ²⁰ partly rumour, through which the facts must have reached the writer, served to deflect and in part falsify them. The account was as follows—

"On the tenth of the last month a deplorable occurrence took place on board *HMS Indomitable*. John Claggart, the ship's master-at arms, discovering that some sort of plot was incipient among an inferior section of the ship's company, and that the ringleader was one William Budd, he, Claggart, in ³⁰ the act of arraigning the man before the Captain was vindictively stabbed to the heart by the suddenly drawn sheath knife of Budd.

"The deed and the implement employed sufficiently suggest that, though mustered into the service under an English name, the assassin was no Englishman, but one of those aliens adopting English cognomen whom the present extraordinary necessities of the Service have caused to be admitted into it in considerable numbers.

"The enormity of the crime and the extreme depravity of the criminal appear the greater in view of the character of the victim, a middle-aged man, respectable and discreet, belonging to that minor official grade, the petty-officers, upon whom, as none know better than the commissioned gentlemen, the efficiency of His Majesty's navy so largely depends. His function was a responsible one, at once onerous and thankless, and his fidelity in it the greater be-

cause of his strong patriotic impulse. In this instance, as in so many other instances in these days, the character of the unfortunate man signally refutes, if refutation were needed, that peevish saving attributed to the late Dr. Johnson, that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.

"The criminal paid the penalty of his crime. The promptitude of the punishment has proved salutary. Nothing amiss is now apprehended aboard the *HMS Indomitable*."

The above item appearing in a publication, now long ago superannuated and forgotten in all that hitherto has stood in human record, to attest what manner of men respectively were John Claggart and Billy Budd.⁴⁷

CHAPTER XXVI

Everything is for a season remarkable in navies. Any tangible object associated with some striking incident of the service is converted into a monument. The spar from which the foretopman was suspended was for some few years kept trace of by the blue-jackets. Then knowledge followed it from ship to dock-yard, and again from dock-yard to ship, still pursuing it even when at last reduced to a mere dock-yard boom. To them a chip of it was as a piece of the Cross. Ignorant though they were of the real facts of the happening, and not thinking but that the penalty was unavoidably inflicted from the naval point of view, for all that they instinctively felt that Billy was a sort of man as incapable of mutiny as of wilful murder. They recalled the fresh young image of the Handsome Sailor, that face never deformed by a sneer or subtler vile freak of the heart within! This impression of him was doubtless deepened by the fact that he was gone, and in a measure mysteriously gone. On the gun decks of the *Indomitable* the general estimate of his nature and its unconscious simplicity eventually found rude utterance from another foretopman, one of his own watch, gifted as some sailors are with an artless poetic temperament. Those tarry hands made some lines which, after circulating among the shipboard crew for a while, finally were rudely printed at Portsmouth as a ballad. The title given to it was the sailor's

⁴⁷ An author's note, crossed out, here appears in the original MS. It reads: "Here, ends a story not unwarranted in this incongruous world of ours—innocence and infirmity, spiritual depravity and full respite [Weaver's note]."

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Preface to the 1855 Edition of "Leaves of Grass" ¹

America does not repel the past or what it has produced under its forms or amid other politics or the idea of castes or the old religions . . . accepts the lesson with calmness . . . is not so impatient as has been supposed that the slough still sticks to

¹ The text printed here is that of the 1855 version, which preceded the twelve untitled poems in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. The three periods () do not indicate editorial omissions; Whitman used them to produce somewhat the same effect as the long lines of his poems. Part of this essay he later

opinions and manners and literature while the life which served its requirements has passed into the new life of the new forms . . . perceives that the corpse is slowly borne from the eating and sleeping rooms of the house . . . perceives that it waits a little while in the door . . . that it was fittest for its

incorporated, taking over whole sentences intact, in "By Blue Ontario's Shore" and other poems. He revised and shortened it for reprinting in his *Complete Prose*. The 1855 version is more characteristic of the poet in his rôle as poet-leader of his country.

days that its action has descended to the stalwart and wellshaped heir who approaches and that he shall be fittest for his days

The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem In the history of the earth hitherto the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly to their ample largeness and stir Here at last is something in the doings of man that corresponds with the broad-cast doings of the day and night Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations Here is action untied from strings necessarily blind to particulars and details magnificently moving in vast masses Here is the hospitality which forever indicates heroes Here are the roughs and beards and space and ruggedness and nonchalance that the soul loves Here the performance disdaining the trivial unapproached in the tremendous audacity of its crowds and groupings and the push of its perspective spreads with crampless and flowing breadth and showers its prolific and splendid extravagance One sees it must indeed own the riches of the summer and winter, and need never be bankrupt while corn grows from the ground or the orchards drop apples or the bays contain fish or men beget children upon women

Other states indicate themselves in their deputies but the genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors but always most in the common people Their manners speech dress friendships—the freshness and candor of their physiognomy—the picturesque looseness of their carriage their deathless attachment to freedom—their aversion to anything indecorous or soft or mean—the practical acknowledgment of the citizens of one state by the citizens of all other states—the fierceness of their roused resentment—their curiosity and welcome of novelty—their self-esteem and wonderful sympathy—their susceptibility to a slight—the air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors—the fluency of their speech—their delight in music, the sure symptom of manly tenderness and native elegance of soul their good temper and open handedness—the terrible significance of their elections—the President's taking off his hat to them not they to him—these too are unrhymed poetry It

awaits the gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it

The largeness of nature or the nation were monstrous without a corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen Not nature nor swarming states nor streets and steamships nor prosperous business nor farms nor capital nor learning may suffice for the ideal of man nor suffice the poet No reminiscences may suffice either A live nation can always cut a deep mark and can have the best authority the cheapest namely from its own soul This is the sum of the profitable uses of individuals or states and of present action and grandeur and of the subjects of poets—As if it were necessary to trot back generation after generation to the eastern records! As if the beauty and sacredness of the demonstrable must fall behind that of the mythical! As if men do not make their mark out of any times! As if the opening of the western continent by discovery and what has transpired since in North and South America were less than the small theatre of the antique or the aimless sleepwalking of the middle ages! The pride of the United States leaves the wealth and finesse of the cities and all returns of commerce and agriculture and all the magnitude of geography or shows of exterior victory to enjoy the breed of full-sized men or one full-sized man unconquerable and simple

The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races Of them a bard is to be commensurate with a people To him the other continents arrive as contributions he gives them reception for their sake and his own sake His spirit responds to his country's spirit he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes Mississippi with annual freshets and changing chutes, Missouri and Columbia and Ohio and Saint Lawrence with the falls and beautiful masculine Hudson, do not embouchure where they spend themselves more than they embouchure into him The blue breadth over the inland sea of Virginia and Maryland and the sea off Massachusetts and Maine and over Manhattan bay and over Champlain and Erie and over Ontario and Huron and Michigan and Superior, and over the Texan and Mexican and Floridian and Cuban seas and over the seas off California and Oregon, is not tallied by the blue breadth of the waters below more than the breadth of above and below is tallied by

him When the long Atlantic coast stretches longer and the Pacific coast stretches longer he easily stretches with them north or south He spans between them also from east to west and reflects what is between them On him rise solid growths that offset the growths of pine and cedar and hemlock and live-oak and locust and chestnut and cypress and hickory and limetree and cottonwood and tuliptree and cactus and wildvine and tamarind and persimmon . . . and tangles as tangled as any canebreak or swamp . . . and forests coated with transparent ice and icicles hanging from the boughs and crackling in the wind . . . and sides and peaks of mountains . . . and pasturage sweet and free as savannah or upland or prairie . . . with flights and songs and screams that answer those of the wildpigeon and highhold and orchard-oriole and coot and surf-duck and redshouldered-hawk and fish-hawk and white-ibis and indian-hen and cat-owl and water-pheasant and quabird and pied-sheldrake and blackbird and mockingbird and buzzard and condor and night-heron and eagle. To him the hereditary countenance descends both mother's and father's To him enter the essences of the real things and past and present events—of the enormous diversity of temperature and agriculture and mines—the tribes of red aborigines—the weather-beaten vessels entering new ports or making landings on rocky coasts—the first settlements north or south—the rapid stature and muscle—the haughty defiance of '76, and the war and peace and formation of the constitution . . . the union always surrounded by blatherers and always calm and impregnable—the perpetual coming of immigrants—the wharfhem'd cities and superior marine—the unsurveyed interior—the loghouses and clearings and wild animals and hunters and trappers the free commerce—the fisheries and whaling and gold-digging—the endless gestation of new states—the convening of Congress every December, the members duly coming up from all climates and the uttermost parts . . . the noble character of the young mechanics and of all free American workmen and workwomen . . . the general ardor and friendliness and enterprise—the perfect equality of the female with the male . . . the large amativeness—the fluid movement of the population—the factories and mercantile life and laborsaving machinery—the Yankee swap—the New-York firemen and the target excursion—the southern plantation life—the character of the northeast and the

northwest and southwest—slavery and the tremulous spreading of hands to protect it, and the stern opposition to it which shall never cease till it ceases or the speaking of tongues and the moving of lips cease. For such the expression of the American poet is to be transcendent and new It is to be indirect and not direct or descriptive or epic Its quality goes through these to much more Let the age and wars of other nations be chanted and their eas and characters be illustrated and that finish the verse Not so the great psalm of the republic Here the theme is creative and has vista Here comes one among the wellbeloved stonemasons and plans with decision and science and sees the solid and beautiful forms of the future where there are now no solid forms

Of all nations the United States with veins full of poetical stuff most need poets and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the greatest Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall Of all mankind the great poet is the equable man. Not in him but off from him things are grotesque or eccentric or fail of their sanity. Nothing out of its place is good and nothing in its place is bad He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportions neither more nor less. He is the arbiter of the diverse and he is the key. He is the equalizer of his age and land . . . he supplies what wants supplying and checks what wants checking. If peace is the routine out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich, thrifty, building vast and populous cities, encouraging agriculture and the arts and commerce—lighting the study of man, the soul, immortality—federal, state or municipal government, marriage, health, freetrade, intertravel by land and sea nothing too close, nothing too far off . . . the stars not too far off. In war he is the most deadly force of the war. Who recruits him recruits horse and foot . . . he fetches parks of artillery the best that engineer ever knew. If the time becomes slothful and heavy he knows how to arouse it . . . he can make every word he speaks draw blood. Whatever stagnates in the flat of custom or obedience or legislation he never stagnates. Obedience does not master him, he masters it High up out of reach he stands turning a concentrated light . . . he turns the pivot with his finger . . . he baffles the swiftest runners as he stands and easily overtakes and envelops them. The time straying toward infidelity and confections and persiflage he withholds by his steady faith . . . he spreads

out his dishes he offers the sweet firmfibred meat that grows men and women His brain is the ultimate brain He is no arguer he is judgment He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun falling around a helpless thing As he sees the farthest he has the most faith His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things In the talk on the soul and eternity and God off of his equal plane he is silent He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and denouement he sees eternity in men and 10 women he does not see men and women as dreams or dots Faith is the antiseptic of the soul

it pervades the common people and preserves them they never give up believing and expecting and trusting There is that indescribable freshness and unconsciousness about an illiterate person that humbles and mocks the power of the noblest expressive genius The poet sees for a certainty how one not a great artist may be just as sacred and perfect as the greatest artist The power to destroy or remould 20 is freely used by him but never the power of attack What is past is past If he does not expose superior models and prove himself by every step he takes he is not what is wanted The presence of the greatest poet conquers not parleying or struggling or any prepared attempts Now he has passed that way see after him! there is not left any vestige of despair or misanthropy or cunning or exclusiveness or the ignominy of a nativity or color or delusion of hell or the necessity of hell and no man thenceforward shall be 30 degraded for ignorance or weakness or sin

The greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality If he breathes into any thing that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe He is a seer he is individual he is complete in himself the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not He is not one of the chorus he does not stop for any regulations he is the president of regulation What the eyesight does to the rest he does to the rest Who 40 knows the curious mystery of the eyesight? The other senses corroborate themselves, but this is removed from any proof but its own and foreruns the identities of the spiritual world A single glance of it mocks all the investigations of man and all the instruments and books of the earth and all reasoning What is marvelous? what is unlikely? what is impossible or baseless or vague? after you have once just opened the space of a peachpit and given audience to far and

near and to the sunset and had all things enter with electric swiftness softly and duly without confusion or jostling or jam

The land and sea, the animals fishes and birds, the sky of heaven and the orbs, the forests mountains and rivers, are not small themes but folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects they expect him to indicate the path between reality and their souls Men and women perceive the beauty well enough probably as well as he The passionate tenacity of hunters, woodmen, early risers, cultivators of gardens and orchards and fields, the love of healthy women for the manly form, seafaring persons, drivers of horses, the passion for light and the open air, all is an old varied sign of the unfailing perception of beauty and of a residence of the poetic in outdoor people They can never be assisted by poets to perceive some may but they never can The poetic

quality is not marshalled in rhyme or uniformity or abstract addresses to things nor in melancholy complaints or good precepts, but is the life of these and much else and is in the soul The profit of rhyme is that it drops seeds of a sweeter and more luxuriant rhyme, and of uniformity that it conveys itself into its own roots in the ground out of sight The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of metrical laws and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs or roses on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges and melons and pears, and shed the perfume impalpable to form The fluency and ornaments of the finest poems or music or orations or recitations are not independent but dependent All beauty comes from beautiful blood and a beautiful brain If the greatnesses are in conjunction in a man or woman it is enough the fact will prevail through the universe but the gaggery and gilt of a million years will not prevail Who troubles himself about his ornaments or fluency is lost This is what you shall do Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open

air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body .

The poet shall not spend his time in unneeded work He shall know that the ground is always ready plowed and manured . . . others may not know it 10 but he shall He shall go directly to the creation His trust shall master the trust of everything he touches . and shall master all attachment

The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet He consumes an eternal passion and is indifferent which chance happens and which possible contingency of fortune or misfortune and persuades daily and hourly his delicious pay What balks or breaks others is fuel for his burning progress to contact and amorous joy Other propor- 20 tions of the reception of pleasure dwindle to nothing to his proportions All expected from heaven or from the highest he is rapport with in the sight of the day-break or a scene of the winter woods or the presence of children playing or with his arm round the neck of a man or woman His love above all love has leisure and expanse . . he leaves room ahead of himself. He is no irresolute or suspicious lover . he is sure . . he scorns intervals His experience and the showers and thrills are not for nothing Nothing can 30 jar him . . . suffering and darkness cannot—death and fear cannot. To him complaint and jealousy and envy are corpses buried and rotten in the earth . . he saw them buried. The sea is not surer of the shore or the shore of the sea than he is of the fruition of his love and of all perfection and beauty

The fruition of beauty is no chance of hit or miss . . it is inevitable as life . . . it is exact and plumb as gravitation. From the eyesight proceeds another eyesight and from the hearing proceeds another hear- 40 ing and from the voice proceeds another voice eternally curious of the harmony of things with man. To these respond perfections not only in the committees that were supposed to stand for the rest but in the rest themselves just the same These understand the law of perfection in masses and floods . . that its finish is to each for itself and onward from itself . . . that it is profuse and impartial . . that there is not a minute of the light or dark nor an acre of the earth

or sea without it—nor any direction of the sky nor any trade or employment nor any turn of events. This is the reason that about the proper expression of beauty there is precision and balance . . one part does not need to be thrust above another The best singer is not the one who has the most lithe and powerful organ . . the pleasure of poems is not in them that take the handsomest measure and similes and sound

Without effort and without exposing in the least how it is done the greatest poet brings the spirit of any or all events and passions and scenes and persons some more and some less to bear on your individual character as you hear or read To do this well is to compete with the laws that pursue and follow time. What is the purpose must surely be there and the clue of it must be there . . and the faintest indication is the indication of the best and then becomes the clearest indication Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet . . he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson . he places himself where the future becomes present. The greatest poet does not only dazzle his rays over character and scenes and passions he finally ascends and finishes all . . . he exhibits the pinnacles that no man can tell what they are for or what is beyond . . he glows a moment on the extremest verge. He is most wonderful in his last half-hidden smile or frown . . by that flash of the moment of parting the one that sees it shall be encouraged or terrified afterwards for many years. The greatest poet does not moralize or make applications of morals . . he knows the soul. The soul has that measureless pride which consists in never acknowledging any lessons but its own. But it has sympathy as measureless as its pride and the one balances the other and neither can stretch too far while it stretches in company with the other. The in- most secrets of art sleep with the twain. The greatest poet has lain close betwixt both and they are vital in his style and thoughts

The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity . . nothing can make up for excess or for the lack of definiteness To carry on the heave of impulse and pierce intellectual depths and

give all subjects their articulations are powers neither common nor very uncommon But to speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside is the flawless triumph of art If you have looked on him who has achieved it you have looked on one of the masters of the artists of all nations and times You shall not contemplate the flight of the gray gull over the bay or the mettlesome action of the blood horse or the tall leaning of sunflowers on their stalk or the appearance of the sun journeying through heaven or the appearance of the moon afterward with any more satisfaction than you shall contemplate him The greatest poet has less a marked style and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of himself He swears to his art, I will not be meddling, I will not have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hang in the way between me and the rest like curtains I will have nothing hang in the way, not the richest curtains What I tell I tell for precisely what it is Let who may exalt or startle or fascinate or soothe I will have purposes as health or heat or snow has and be as regardless of observation What I experience or portray shall go from my composition without a shred of my composition You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me

The old red blood and stainless gentility of great poets will be proved by their unconstraint A heroic person walks at his ease through and out of that custom or precedent or authority that suits him not Of the traits of the brotherhood of writers savans musicians inventors and artists nothing is finer than silent defiance advancing from new free forms In the need of poems philosophy politics mechanism science behaviour, the craft of art, an appropriate native grand-opera, shipcraft or any craft, he is greatest forever and forever who contributes the greatest original practical example The cleanest expression is that which finds no sphere worthy of itself and makes one.

The messages of great poets to each man and woman are, Come to us on equal terms, Only then can you understand us, We are no better than you, What we enclose you enclose, What we enjoy you may enjoy Did you suppose there could be only one Supreme? We affirm there can be unnumbered Supremes, and that one does not countervail another

any more than one eyesight countervails another and that men can be good or grand only of the consciousness of their supremacy within them What do you think is the grandeur of storms and dismemberments and the deadliest battles and wrecks and the wildest fury of the elements and the power of the sea and the motion of nature and of the throes of human desires and dignity and hate and love? It is that something in the soul which says, Rage on, Whirl on, I tread master here and everywhere Master of the spasms of the sky and of the shatter of the sea, Master of nature and passion and death, And of all terror and all pain

The American bards shall be marked for generosity and affection and for encouraging competitors They shall be kosmos without monopoly or secrecy glad to pass any thing to any one hungry for equals night and day They shall not be careful of riches and privilege they shall be rich and privilege they shall perceive who the most affluent man is The most affluent man is he that confronts all the shows he sees by equivalents out of the stronger wealth of himself The American bard shall delineate no class of persons nor one or two out of the strata of interests nor love most nor truth most nor the soul most nor the body most and not be for the eastern states more than the western or the northern states more than the southern

Exact science and its practical movements are no checks on the greatest poet but always his encouragement and support The outset and remembrance are there there the arms that lifted him first and brace him best there he returns after all his goings and comings The sailor and traveler the atomist chemist astronomer geologist phrenologist spiritualist mathematician historian and lexicographer are not poets, but they are the lawgivers of poets and their construction underlies the structure of every perfect poem No matter what rises or is uttered they sent the seed of the conception of it of them and by them stand the visible proofs of souls always of their fatherstuff must be begotten the sinewy races of bards If there shall be love and content between the father and the son and if the greatness of the son is the exuding of the greatness of the father there shall be love between the poet and the man of demonstrable science In the beauty of poems are the tuft and final applause of science

Great is the faith of the flush of knowledge and of

the investigation of the depths of qualities and things. Cleaving and circling here swells the soul of the poet yet is president of itself always. The depths are fathomless and therefore calm. The innocence and nakedness are resumed. They are neither modest nor immodest. The whole theory of the special and supernatural and all that was twined with it or educed out of it departs as a dream. What has ever happened

what happens and whatever may or shall happen, the vital laws enclose all. They are sufficient for any case and for all cases. None to be hurried or retarded. Any miracle of affairs or persons inadmissible in the vast clear scheme where every motion and every spear of grass and the frames and spirits of men and women and all that concerns them are unspeakably perfect miracles all referring to all and each distinct and in its place. It is also not consistent with the reality of the soul to admit that there is anything in the known universe more divine than men and women.

Men and women and the earth and all upon it are simply to be taken as they are, and the investigation of their past and present and future shall be unintermitted and shall be done with perfect candor. Upon this basis philosophy speculates ever looking toward the poet, ever regarding the eternal tendencies of all toward happiness never inconsistent with what is clear to the senses and to the soul. For the eternal tendencies of all toward happiness make the only point of sane philosophy. Whatever comprehends less than that. . . whatever is less than the laws of light and of astronomical motion. . . or less than the laws that follow the thief the liar the glutton and the drunkard through this life and doubtless afterward. . . or less than vast stretches of time or the slow formation of density or the patient upheaving of strata—is of no account. Whatever would put God in a poem or system of philosophy as contending against some being or influence is also of no account. Sanity and ensemble characterise the great master. . . spoilt in one principle all is spoilt. The great master has nothing to do with miracles. He sees health for himself in being one of the mass. . . he sees the hiatus in singular eminence. To the perfect shape comes common ground. To be under the general law is great for that is to correspond with it. The master knows that he is unspeakably great and that all are unspeakably great. . . that nothing for instance is greater than to conceive children and bring them

up well. . . that to be is just as great as to perceive or tell.

In the make of the great masters the idea of political liberty is indispensable. Liberty takes the adherence of heroes wherever men and women exist. . . but never takes any adherence or welcome from the rest more than from poets. They are the voice and exposition of liberty. They out of ages are worthy the grand idea. . . to them it is confided and they must sustain it. Nothing has precedence of it and nothing can warp or degrade it. The attitude of great poets is to cheer up slaves and horrify despots. The turn of their necks, the sound of their feet, the motions of their wrists, are full of hazard to the one and hope to the other. Come nigh them awhile and though they neither speak or advise you shall learn the faithful American lesson. Liberty is poorly served by men whose good intent is quelled from one failure or two failures or any number of failures, or from the casual indifference or ingratitude of the people, or from the sharp show of the tushes of power, or the bringing to bear soldiers and cannon or any penal statutes. Liberty relies upon itself, invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and light, is positive and composed, and knows no discouragement. The battle rages with many a loud alarm and frequent advance and retreat. . . the enemy triumphs. . . the prison, the handcuffs, the iron necklace and anklet, the scaffold, garrote and leadballs do their work. The cause is asleep. . . the strong throats are choked with their own blood. . . the young men drop their eyelashes toward the ground when they pass each other. . . and is liberty gone out of that place? No never. When liberty goes it is not the first to go nor the second nor third to go. . . it waits for all the rest to go. . . it is the last. . . When the memories of the old martyrs are faded utterly away. . . when the large names of patriots are laughed at in the public halls from the lips of the orators. . . when the boys are no more christened after the same but christened after tyrants and traitors instead. . . when the laws of the free are grudgingly permitted and laws for informers and bloodmoney are sweet to the taste of the people. . . when I and you walk abroad upon the earth stung with compassion at the sight of numberless brothers answering our equal friendship and calling no man master—and when we are elated with noble joy at the sight of slaves. . . when the soul retires in the cool communion of the

night and surveys its experience and has much extasy over the word and deed that put back a helpless innocent person into the gripe of the grippers or into any cruel inferiority when those in all parts of these states who could easier realize the true American character but do not yet—when the swarms of cringers, suckers, doughfaces, lice of politics, planners of sly involutions for their own preferment to city offices or state legislatures or the judiciary or congress or the presidency, obtain a response of love and natural deference from the people whether they get the offices or no when it is better to be a bound booby and rogue in office at a high salary than the poorest free mechanic or farmer with his hat unmoved from his head and firm eyes and a candid and generous heart and when servility by town or state or the federal government or any oppression on a large scale or small scale can be tried on without its own punishment following duly after in exact proportion against the smallest chance of escape or rather when all life and all the souls of men and women are discharged from any part of the earth—then only shall the instinct of liberty be discharged from that part of the earth

As the attributes of the poets of the kosmos centre in the real body and soul and in the pleasure of things they possess the superiority of genuineness over all fiction and romance As they emit themselves facts are showered over with light the daylight is lit with more volatile light also the deep between the setting and rising sun goes deeper many fold Each precise object or condition or combination or process exhibits a beauty the multiplication table its—old age its—the carpenter's trade its—the grand-opera its the hugehulled cleanshaped New-York clipper at sea under steam or full sail gleams with unmatched beauty the American circles and large harmonies of government gleam with theirs and the commonest definite intentions and actions with theirs The poets of the kosmos advance through all interpositions and coverings and turmoils and stratagems to first principles They are of use they dissolve poverty from its need and riches from its conceit You large proprietor they say shall not realize or perceive more than any one else The owner of the library is not he who holds a legal title to it having bought and paid for it Any one and every one is owner of the library who can read the same through all the vanities of tongues and subjects

and styles, and in whom they enter with ease and take residence and force toward paternity and maternity, and make supple and powerful and rich and large

These American states strong and healthy and accomplished shall receive no pleasure from violations of natural models and must not permit them In paintings or mouldings or carvings in mineral or wood, or in the illustrations of books or newspapers, or in any comic or tragic prints, or in the patterns of woven stuffs or anything to beautify rooms or furniture or costumes, or to put upon cornices or monuments or on the prows or sterns of ships, or to put anywhere before the human eye indoors or out, that which distorts honest shapes or which creates unearthly beings or plices or contingencies is a nuisance and revolt Of the human form especially it is so great it must never be made ridiculous Of ornaments to a work nothing outre can be allowed but those ornaments can be allowed that conform to the perfect facts of the open air and that flow out of the nature of the work and come irrepressibly from it and are necessary to the completion of the work Most works are most beautiful without ornament Exaggerations will be revenged in human physiology Clean and vigorous children are jettied and conceived only in those communities where the models of natural forms are public every day Great genius and the people of these states must never be demeaned to romances As soon as histories are properly told there is no more need of romances

The great poets are also to be known by the absence in them of tricks and by the justification of perfect personal candor Then folks echo a new cheap joy and a divine voice leaping from their brains How beautiful is candor! All faults may be forgiven of him who has perfect candor Henceforth let no man of us lie, for we have seen that openness wins the inner and outer world and that there is no single exception, and that never since our earth gathered itself in a mass have deceit or subterfuge or prevarication attracted its smallest particle or the faintest tinge of a shade—and that through the enveloping wealth and rank of a state or the whole republic of states a sneak or sly person shall be discovered and despised and that the soul has never been once fooled and never can be fooled and thrift without the loving nod of the soul is only a foetid puff and there never grew up in any of the continents of the globe nor upon any planet or satellite or star, nor upon the

asteroids, nor in any part of ethereal space, nor in the midst of density, nor under the fluid wet of the sea, nor in that condition which precedes the birth of babes, nor at any time during the changes of life, nor in that condition that follows what we term death, nor in any stretch of abeyance or action afterward of vitality, nor in any process of formation or reformation anywhere, a being whose instinct hated the truth

Extreme caution or prudence, the soundest organic health, large hope and comparison and fondness for women and children, large alimentiveness and destructiveness and causality, with a perfect sense of the oneness of nature and the propriety of the same spirit applied to human affairs . . . these are called up of the float of the brain of the world to be parts of the greatest poet from his birth out of his mother's womb and from her birth out of her mother's. Caution seldom goes far enough. It has been thought that the prudent citizen was the citizen who applied himself to solid gains and did well for himself and his family and completed a lawful life without debt or crime. The greatest poet sees and admits these economies as he sees the economies of food and sleep, but has higher notions of prudence than to think he gives much when he gives a few slight attentions at the latch of the gate. The premises of the prudence of life are not the hospitality of it or the ripeness and harvest of it. Beyond the independence of a little sum laid aside for burial-money, and of a few clapboards around and shingles overhead on a lot of American soil owned, and the easy dollars that supply the year's plain clothing and meals, the melancholy prudence of the abandonment of such a great being as a man is to the toss and pallor of years of moneymaking with all their scorching days and icy nights and all their stifling deceits and underhanded dodgings, or infinitesimals of parlors, or shameless stuffing while others starve . . . and all the loss of the bloom and odor of the earth and of the flowers and atmosphere and of the sea and of the true taste of the women and men you pass or have to do with in youth or middle age, and the issuing sickness and desperate revolt at the close of a life without elevation or naivete, and the ghastly chatter of a death without serenity or majesty . . . is the great fraud upon modern civilization and forethought, blotching the surface and system which civilization undeniably drafts, and moistening with tears the immense features it spreads and spreads with

such velocity before the reached kisses of the soul

Still the right explanation remains to be made about prudence. The prudence of the mere wealth and respectability of the most esteemed life appears too faint for the eye to observe at all when little and large alike drop quietly aside at the thought of the prudence suitable for immortality. What is wisdom that fills the thinness of a year or seventy or eighty years to wisdom spaced out by ages and coming back at a certain time with strong reinforcements and rich presents and the clear faces of wedding-guests as far as you can look in every direction running gaily toward you? Only the soul is of itself . . . all else has reference to what ensues. All that a person does or thinks is of consequence. Not a move can a man or woman make that affects him or her in a day or a month or any part of the direct lifetime or the hour of death but the same affects him or her onward afterward through the indirect lifetime. The indirect is always as great and real as the direct. The spirit receives from the body just as much as it gives to the body. Not one name of word or deed . . . not of venereal sores or discolorations . . . not the privacy of the onanist . . . not of the putrid veins of gluttons or rum-drinkers . . . not speculation or cunning or betrayal or murder . . . no serpentine poison of those that seduce women . . . not the foolish yielding of women . . . not prostitution . . . not of any depravity of young men . . . not of the attainment of gain by discreditable means . . . not any nastiness of appetite . . . not any harshness of officers to men or judges to prisoners or fathers to sons or sons to fathers or husbands to wives or bosses to their boys . . . not of greedy looks or malignant wishes . . . nor any of the wiles practised by people upon themselves . . . ever is or ever can be stamped on the programme but it is duly realized and returned, and that returned in further performances . . . and they returned again. Nor can the push of charity or personal force ever be any thing else than the profoundest reason, whether it bring arguments to hand or no. No specification is necessary . . . to add or subtract or divide is in vain. Little or big, learned or unlearned, white or black, legal or illegal, sick or well, from the first inspiration down the windpipe to the last expiration out of it, all that a male or female does that is vigorous and benevolent and clean is so much sure profit to him or her in the unshakable order of the universe and through the whole scope of it for-

ever If the savage or felon is wise it is well if
 the greatest poet or savior is wise it is simply the same
 if the President or chief justice is wise it is the
 same if the young mechanic or farmer is wise it
 is no more or less if the prostitute is wise it is
 no more nor less The interest will come round
 all will come round All the best actions of war and
 peace all help given to relatives and strangers
 and the poor and old and sorrowful and young children
 and widows and the sick, and to all shunned persons
 all furtherance of fugitives and of the
 escape of slaves all the self denial that stood
 steady and aloof on wrecks and saw others take the
 seats of the boats all offering of substance or
 life for the good old cause, or for a friend's sake or
 opinion's sake all pains of enthusiasts scoffed
 at by their neighbors all the vast sweet love and
 precious suffering of mothers all honest men
 baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded all the
 grandeur and good of the few ancient nations whose
 fragments of annals we inherit and all the good
 of the hundreds of far mightier and more ancient
 nations unknown to us by name or date or location
 all that was ever manfully begun, whether it
 succeeded or no all that has at any time been
 well suggested out of the divine heart of man or by
 the divinity of his mouth or by the shaping of his
 great hands and all that is well thought or done
 this day on any part of the surface of the globe
 or on any of the wandering stars or fixed stars by
 those there as we are here or that is henceforth
 to be well thought or done by you whoever you are,
 or by any one—these singly and wholly inured at
 their time and inure now and will inure always to the
 identities from which they sprung or shall spring
 Did you guess any of them lived only its mo-
 ment? The world does not so exist no parts
 palpable or impalpable so exist no result exists
 now without being from its long antecedent result,
 and that from its antecedent, and so backward with-
 out the farthest mentionable spot coming a bit nearer
 the beginning than any other spot Whatever
 satisfies the soul is truth The prudence of the great-
 est poet answers at last the craving and glut of the
 soul, is not contemptuous of less ways of prudence
 if they conform to its ways, puts off nothing, permits
 no let-up for its own case or any case, has no par-
 ticular sabbath or judgment day, divides not the liv-
 ing from the dead or the righteous from the unright-

eous, is satisfied with the present, matches every
 thought or act by its correlative, knows no possible
 forgiveness or deputed atonement knows that
 the young man who composedly periled his life and
 lost it has done exceeding well for himself, while the
 man who has not periled his life and retains it to old
 age in riches and ease has perhaps achieved nothing
 for himself worth mentioning and that only
 that person has no great prudence to learn who has
 learnt to prefer real longlived things, and favors body
 and soul the same, and perceives the indirect as-
 suredly following the direct, and what evil or good
 he does leaping onward and waiting to meet him
 again—and who in his spirit in any emergency what-
 ever neither hurries or avoids death

The direct trial of him who would be the greatest
 poet is today If he does not flood himself with the
 immediate age as with vast oceanic tides and
 if he does not attract his own land body and soul to
 himself and hang on its neck with incomparable love
 and plunge his semitic muscle into its merits and
 demerits and if he be not himself the age trans-
 figured and if to him is not opened the eternity
 which gives similitude to all periods and locations and
 processes and animate and inanimate forms, and
 which is the bond of time, and rises up from its
 inconceivable vagueness and infiniteness in the swim-
 ming shape of today, and is held by the ductile
 anchors of life, and makes the present spot the
 passage from what was to what shall be, and commits
 itself to the representation of this wave of an hour
 and this one of the sixty beautiful children of the
 wave—let him merge in the general run and wait his
 development Still the final test of poems or
 any character or work remains The prescient poet
 projects himself centuries ahead and judges per-
 former or performance after the changes of time
 Does it live through them? Does it still hold on
 untired? Will the same style and the direction of
 genius to similar points be satisfactory now? Has no
 new discovery in science or arrival at superior planes
 of thought and judgment and behaviour fixed him or
 his so that either can be looked down upon? Have
 the marches of tens and hundreds and thousands of
 years made willing detours to the right hand and the
 left hand for his sake? Is he beloved long and long
 after he is buried? Does the young man think often
 of him? and the young woman think often of him?
 and do the middle-aged and the old think of him?

A great poem is for ages and ages in common and for all degrees and complexions and all departments and sects and for a woman as much as a man and a man as much as a woman. A great poem is no finish to a man or woman but rather a beginning. Has any one fancied he could sit at last under some due authority and rest satisfied with explanations and realize and be content and full? To no such terminus does the greatest poet bring. . . he brings neither cessation or sheltered fatness and ease. The touch of him tells in action. Whom he takes he takes with firm sure grasp into live regions previously unattained. . . thenceforward is no rest. . . they see the space and ineffable sheen that turn the old spots and lights into dead vacuums. The companion of him beholds the birth and progress of stars and learns one of the meanings. Now there shall be a man cohered out of tumult and chaos. . . the elder encourages the younger and shows him how. . . they two shall launch off fearlessly together till the new world fits an orbit for itself and looks unabashed on the lesser orbits of the stars and sweeps through the ceaseless rings and shall never be quiet again.

There will soon be no more priests. Their work is done. They may wait awhile. . . perhaps a generation or two. . . dropping off by degrees. A superior breed shall take their place. . . the gangs of kosmos and prophets en masse shall take their place. A new order shall arise and they shall be the priests of man, and every man shall be his own priest. The churches built under their umbrage shall be the churches of men and women. Through the divinity of themselves shall the kosmos and the new breed of poets be interpreters of men and women and of all events and things. They shall find their inspiration in real objects today, symptoms of the past and future. . . They shall not deign to defend immortality or God or the perfection of things or liberty or the exquisite beauty and reality of the soul. They shall arise in America and be responded to from the remainder of the earth.

The English language befriends the grand American expression. . . it is brawny enough and limber and full enough. On the tough stock of a race who through all change of circumstances was never without the idea of political liberty, which is the animus of all liberty, it has attracted the terms of daintier and gayer and subtler and more elegant tongues. It is the powerful language of resistance. . . it is the

dialect of common sense. It is the speech of the proud and melancholy races and of all who aspire. It is the chosen tongue to express growth faith self-esteem freedom justice equality friendliness amplitude prudence decision and courage. It is the medium that shall well nigh express the inexpressible.

No great literature nor any like style of behaviour or oratory or social intercourse or household arrangements or public institutions or the treatment by bosses of employed people, nor executive detail or detail of the army or navy, nor spirit of legislation or courts or police or tuition or architecture or songs or amusements or the costumes of young men, can long elude the jealous and passionate instinct of American standards. Whether or no the sign appears from the mouths of the people, it throbs a live interrogation in every freeman's and freewoman's heart after that which passes by or this built to remain. Is it uniform with my country? Are its disposals without ignominious distinctions? Is it for the evergrowing communes of brothers and lovers, large, well-united, proud beyond the old models, generous beyond all models? Is it something grown fresh out of the fields or drawn from the sea for use to me today here? I know that what answers for me an American must answer for any individual or nation that serves for a part of my materials. Does this answer? or is it without reference to universal needs? or sprung of the needs of the less developed society of special ranks? or old needs of pleasure overlaid by modern science and forms? Does this acknowledge liberty with audible and absolute acknowledgement, and set slavery at naught for life and death? Will it help breed one goodshaped and wellhung man, and a woman to be his perfect and independent mate? Does it improve manners? Is it for the nursing of the young of the republic? Does it solve readily with the sweet milk of the nipples of the breasts of the mother of many children? Has it too the old ever-fresh forbearance and impartiality? Does it look with the same love on the last born and on those hardening toward stature, and on the errant, and on those who disdain all strength of assault outside of their own?

The poems distilled from other poems will probably pass away. The coward will surely pass away. The expectation of the vital and great can only be satisfied by the demeanor of the vital and great. The swarms of the polished deprecating and reflectors and the polite float off and leave no remembrance. Amer-

ica prepares with composure and goodwill for the visitors that have sent word. It is not intellect that is to be their warrant and welcome. The talented, the artist, the ingenious, the editor, the statesman, the erudite — they are not unappreciated — they fall in their place and do their work. The soul of the nation also does its work. No disguise can pass on it — no disguise can conceal from it. It rejects none, it permits all. Only toward as good as itself and toward the like of itself will it advance half way. An individual is as superb as a nation when he has the qualities which make a superb nation. The soul of the largest and wealthiest and proudest nation may well go half-way to meet that of its poets. The signs are effectual. There is no fear of mistake. If the one is true the other is true. The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it.

1855

FROM

*Song of Myself*²

1

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy

10

2

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the distillation, it is odorless,
It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me

20

The smoke of my own breath,
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love root, silk thread, crotch and vine,
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of blood and
air through my lungs,

² This is not one of Whitman's best poems, artistically but it contains most of the ideas which he developed in later works. It was untitled in the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, was later called

"Walt Whitman and first in 1881 "Song of Myself." The poet revised many lines in the original poem. Most of the final version is printed here, and omissions are indicated.

The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and dark-color'd sea-rocks,
 and of hay in the barn,
 The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the eddies of the wind,
 A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,
 The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag,
 The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hill-sides,
 The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed and
 meeting the sun

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you reckon'd the earth much? 30
 Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?
 Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,
 You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns left,)
 You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the eyes
 of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books,
 You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,
 You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self

3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the beginning and the end,
 But I do not talk of the beginning or the end

There was never any more inception than there is now, 40
 Nor any more youth or age than there is now,
 And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
 Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now

Urge and urge and urge,
 Always the procreant urge of the world
 Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance and increase,
 always sex,
 Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed of life.

To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that it is so

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well entretied,³ braced in the
 beams,
 Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical, 50
 I and this mystery here we stand

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,
 Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes age,
 Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they discuss I am silent,
 and go bathe and admire myself.

³ Coined from Fr. *entretenir*, to support

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty and clean,
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less familiar than
the rest

I am satisfied—I see, dance, laugh, sing,
As the hugging and loving bed fellow sleeps at my side through the night, and
withdraws at the peep of the day with stealthy tread, 60
Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the house with their plenty,
Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream at my eyes,
That they turn from gazing after and down the road,
And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,
Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and which is ahead?

4

Trippers and askers surround me,
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the ward and city I live in,
or the nation,
The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old and new,
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love, 70
The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill doing or loss or lack of money,
or depressions or exaltations,
Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful news, the fitful events,
These come to me days and nights and go from me again,
But they are not the Me myself

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,
Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary,
Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable certain rest,
Looking with side curved head curious what will come next,
Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it
Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog with linguists and
contenders, 80
I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait

5

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you,
And you must not be abased to the other
Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture, not even the best,
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over upon me,
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my bare-
stript heart,
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held my feet 90
Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the
argument of the earth,

And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
 And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
 And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters
 and lovers,
 And that a kelson of the creation is love,
 And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
 And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
 And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein and poke-weed

6

A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full hands,
 How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he 100

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
 A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,
 Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark,
 and say *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
 And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
 Growing among black folks as among white,
 Kanuck,⁴ Tuckahoe,⁵ Congressman, Cuff,⁶ I give them the same, I receive them
 the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves. 110

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
 It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
 It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,
 It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon out of their
 mothers' laps,
 And here you are the mothers' laps

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,
 Darker than the colorless beards of old men,
 Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,
 And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing. 120

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,
 And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of
 their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
 And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,
 The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,

⁴ Canadian; Whitman often affected the spelling "*Kanada*"

⁵ Nickname for Eastern Virginia

⁶ Common nickname for a Negro.

And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd

All goes onward and outward nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier 130

7

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I know it
I pass death with the dying and birth with the new wash'd babe, and am not
contain'd betwixt my hat and boots,
And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every one good,
The earth good and the stars good, and their adjuncts all good
I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,
I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal and fathomless as
myself,
(They do not know how immortal, but I know)

Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine male and female,
For me those that have been boys and that love women, 140
For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings to be slighted,
For me the sweet heart and the old maid, for me mothers and the mothers of
mothers,
For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,
For me children and the begetters of children

Undrape! you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor discarded,
I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,
And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless, and cannot be shaken away

8

The little one sleeps in its cradle,
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away flies with my hand
The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy hill, 150
I peeringly view them from the top

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the pistol has fallen
The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles, talk of the promenaders,
The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb, the clank of the shod
horses on the granite floor,
The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-balls,
The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous'd mobs,
The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside borne to the hospital,
The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall,
The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly working his passage to the
centre of the crowd, 160
The unpassive stones that receive and return so many echoes
What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sunstruck or in fits,

SONG OF MYSELF

What exclamations of women taken suddenly who hurry home and give birth to
babes,
What living and buried speech is always vibrating here, what howls restrain'd by
decorum,
Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, acceptances, rejections with
convex lips,
I mind them or the show or resonance of them—I come and I depart.

9

The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready,
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-drawn wagon,
The clear light plays on the brown gray and green intertinged,
The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow 170
I am there, I help, I came stretch'd atop of the load,
I felt its soft jolts, one leg reclined on the other,
I jump from the cross-beams and seize the clover and timothy,
And roll head over heels and tangle my hair full of wisps.

10

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt,
Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee,
In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass the night,
Kindling a fire and broiling the fresh-kill'd game,
Falling asleep on the gather'd leaves with my dog and gun by my side.
The Yankee clipper is under her sky-sails, she cuts the sparkle and scud, 180
My eyes settle the land, I bend at her prow or shout joyously from the deck.
The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early and stopt for me,
I tuck'd my trowser-ends in my boots and went and had a good time;
You should have been with us that day round the chowder-kettle
I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far west, the bride was a
red girl,
Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged and dumbly smoking, they had
moccasins to their feet and large thick blankets hanging from their shoulders,
On a bank lounged the trapper, he was drest mostly in skins, his luxuriant beard
and curls protected his neck, he held his bride by the hand,
She had long eyelashes, her head was bare, her coarse straight locks descended upon
her voluptuous limbs and reach'd to her feet.
The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the wood pile, 190
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak,
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him,
And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and bruised feet,
And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave him some coarse clean
clothes,
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles;

He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and pass'd north,
I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in the corner

11

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,
Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly, 200
Twenty eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,
She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the window

Which of the young men does she like the best?
Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth bather,
The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them

The beards of the young men glisten'd with wet, it ran from their long hair, 210
Little streams pass'd all over their bodies

An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,
It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge to the sun, they do
not ask who seizes fast to them,
They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bending arch,
They do not think whom they souse with spray

12

The butcher-boy puts off his killing clothes, or sharpens his knife at the stall in the
market,

I loiter enjoying his repartee and his shuffle and break-down

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the anvil,
Each has his main sledge, they are all out, there is a great heat in the fire 220

From the cinder strew'd threshold I follow their movements,
The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their massive arms,
Overhand the hammers swing, overhand so slow, overhand so sure,
They do not hasten, each man hits in his place

13

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the block swags underneath on
its tied over chain,

The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard, steady and tall he stands
pois'd on one leg on the string-piece,

His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and loosens over his hip band,
His glance is calm and commanding, he tosses the slouch of his hat away from his
forehead,

The sun falls on his crispy hair and mustache, falls on the black of his polish'd
and perfect limbs

I behold the picturesque giant and love him, and I do not stop there, 230
I go with the team also

In me the caresser of life wherever moving, backward as well as forward slung,
To niches aside and junior bending, not a person or object missing,
Absorbing all to myself and for this song

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy shade, what is that you
express in your eyes?
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck on my distant and day-long ramble,
They rise together, they slowly circle around

I believe in those wing'd purposes, 240
And acknowledge red, yellow, white, playing within me,
And consider green and violet and the tufted crown intentional,
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not something else,
And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut, yet trills pretty well to me,
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me

14

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night,
Ya-honk he says, and sounds it down to me like an invitation,
The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listening close,
Find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry sky.

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the house-sill, the chickadee, the
prairie-dog, 250
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats,
The brood of the turkey-hen and she with her half-spread wings,
I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections,
They scorn the best I can do to relate them

I am enamour'd of growing out-doors,
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean or woods,
Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders of axes and mauls, and the
drivers of horses,
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me, 260
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will take me,
Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,
Scattering it freely forever.

16

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise,
 Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,
 Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man,
 Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse and stuff'd with the stuff that is fine,
 One of the Nation of many nations, the smallest the same and the largest the same,
 A Southerner soon as a Northerner, a planter nonchalant and hospitable down by
 the Oconee I live,
 A Yankee bound my own way ready for trade, my joints the lumberest joints on
 earth and the sternest joints on earth, 270
 A Kentuckian walking the vale of the Elkhorn in my deer-skin leggings, a Louisianian
 or Georgian,
 A boatman over lakes or bays or along coasts, a Hoosier, Badger, Buckeye,⁷
 At home on Kanadian snow shoes or up in the bush, or with fishermen off New-
 foundland,
 At home in the fleet of ice boats, sailing with the rest and tacking,
 At home on the hills of Vermont or in the woods of Maine, or the Texan ranch,
 Comrade of Californians, comrade of free North Westerners, (loving their big
 proportions,)
 Comrade of raftsmen and coalmen, comrade of all who shake hands and welcome
 to drink and meat,
 A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the thoughtfulest,
 A novice beginning yet experient of myriads of seasons,
 Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion, 280
 A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker,
 Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest
 I resist any thing better than my own diversity,
 Breathe the air but leave plenty after me,
 And am not stuck up, and am in my place
 (The moth and the fish-eggs are in their place,
 The bright suns I see and the dark suns I cannot see are in their place,
 The palpable is in its place and the impalpable is in its place)

17

These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands, they are not original
 with me,
 If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or next to nothing, 290
 If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle they are nothing,
 If they are not just as close as they are distant they are nothing
 This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is,
 This the common air that bathes the globe

18

With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums,
 I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play marches for conquer'd and
 slain persons

⁷ Residents of Indiana, Wisconsin, and Ohio, respectively

SONG OF MYSELF

Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?
I also say it is good to fall, battles are lost in the same spirit in which they are won
I beat and pound for the dead,
I blow through my embouchures my loudest and gayest for them 300
Vivas to those who have fail'd!
And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!
And to those themselves who sank in the sea!
And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome heroes!
And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest heroes known!

19

This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural hunger,
It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous, I make appointments with all,
I will not have a single person slighted or left away,
The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,
The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited, 310
There shall be no difference between them and the rest

This is the press of a bashful hand, this the float and odor of hair,
This the touch of my lips to yours, this the murmur of yearning,
This the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face,
This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again.

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?
Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have, and the mica on the side of a
rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish?
Does the daylight astonish? does the early redstart twittering through the woods?
Do I astonish more than they? 320

This hour I tell things in confidence,
I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

.

21

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with me,
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate into a new tongue

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

I chant the chant of dilation or pride,
We have had ducking and deprecating about enough, 330
I show that size is only development.

Have you outstript the rest? are you the President?
It is a trifle, they will more than arrive there every one, and still pass on.

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,
I call to the earth and sea half held by the night

Press close bare bosom'd night—press close magnetic nourishing night!
Night of south winds—night of the large few stars!
Still nodding night—mad naked summer night

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!
Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains misty topt!
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with blue!
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for my sake!
Far swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple blossom'd earth!
Smile, for your lover comes

340

Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to you give love!
O unspeakable passionate love

22

You sea! I resign myself to you also—I guess what you mean,
I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,
I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me,
We must have a turn together, I undress, hurry me out of sight of the land,
Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse,
Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you

350

Sea of stretch'd ground-swells,
Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths,
Sea of the brine of life and of unshovel'd yet always ready graves,
Howler and scooper of storms, capricious and dainty sea,
I am integral with you, I too am of one phase and of all phases

Partaker of influx and efflux, I, extoller of hate and conciliation,
Extoller of amies and those that sleep in each others' arms

360

I am he attesting sympathy,
(Shall I make my list of things in the house and skip the house that supports them?)

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?
Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand indifferent,
My gait is no fault-finder's or rejector's gait,
I moisten the roots of all that has grown

Did you fear some scrofula out of the unflagging pregnancy?
Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be work'd over and rectified?

370

I find one side a balance and the antipodal side a balance,
Soft doctrine as steady help as stable doctrine,
Thoughts and deeds of the present our rouse and early start

SONG OF MYSELF

This minute that comes to me over the past decillions,
There is no better than it and now

What behaved well in the past or behaves well to-day is not such a wonder,
The wonder is always and always how there can be a mean man or an infidel.

23

Endless unfolding of words of ages!
And mine a word of the modern, the word *En-Masse*.⁸

A word of the faith that never balks, 380
Here or henceforward it is all the same to me, I accept Time absolutely.

It alone is without flaw, it alone rounds and completes all,
That mystic baffling wonder alone completes all

I accept Reality and dare not question it,
Materialism first and last imbuing

Hurrah for positive science! long live exact demonstration!
Fetch stonecrop mixt with cedar and branches of lilac,
This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made a grammar of the old
cartouches,

These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown seas,
This is the geologist, this works with the scalpel, and this is a mathematician. 390

Gentlemen, to you the first honors always!
Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,
I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.

Less the reminders of properties told my words,
And more the reminders they of life untold, and of freedom and extrication,
And make short account of neuters and geldings, and favor men and women fully
equipt,
And beat the gong of revolt, and stop with fugitives and them that plot and conspire.

24

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding,
No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart from them, 400
No more modest than immodest.

Unscrew the locks from the doors!
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!

Whoever degrades another degrades me,
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the current and index.

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the
same terms

⁸ Another French coinage—the group, the mass, a “democratic” word

Through me many long dumb voices,
 Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves, 410
 Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,
 Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,
 And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of the father stuff,
 And of the nights of them the others are down upon,
 Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,
 Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung

Through me forbidden voices,
 Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,
 Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd

I do not press my fingers across my mouth, 420
 I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and heart,
 Copulation is no more rank to me than death is

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,
 Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from,
 The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,
 This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the spread of my own body,
 or any part of it,
 Translucent mould of me it shall be you!
 Shaded ledges and rests it shall be you! 430
 Firm masculine colter it shall be you!
 Whatever goes to the tilth of me it shall be you!
 You my rich blood! your milky stream pale strippings of my life!
 Breast that presses against other breasts it shall be you!
 My brain it shall be your occult convolutions!
 Root of wash'd sweet-flag! timorous pond-snipe! nest of guarded duplicate eggs!
 it shall be you!

Mix'd tussled hay of head, beard, brawn, it shall be you!
 Trickling sap of maple, fibre of manly wheat, it shall be you!
 Sun so generous it shall be you!
 Vapors lighting and shading my face it shall be you! 440
 You sweaty brooks and dews it shall be you!
 Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me it shall be you!
 Broad muscular fields, branches of live oak, loving lounge in my winding paths,
 it shall be you!
 Hands I have taken, face I have kiss'd, mortal I have ever touch'd, it shall be you

I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious,
 Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy,
 I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the cause of my faintest wish,
 Nor the cause of the friendship I emit, nor the cause of the friendship I take again

That I walk up my stoop, I pause to consider if it really be,
 A morning glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books 450

To behold the day-break!
 The little light fades the immense and diaphanous shadows,
 The air tastes good to my palate
 Hefts of the moving world at innocent gambols silently rising, freshly exuding,
 Scooting obliquely high and low
 Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs,
 Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven
 The earth by the sky staid with, the daily close of their junction,
 The heav'd challenge from the east that moment over my head,
 The mocking taunt, See then whether you shall be master!

460

27

To be in any form, what is that?
 (Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back thither,)
 If nothing lay more develop'd the quahaug in its callous shell were enough
 Mine is no callous shell,
 I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or stop,
 They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me
 I merely stir, press, feel with my fingers, and am happy,
 To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as I can stand.

28

Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity,
 Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,
 Treacherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,
 My flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike what is hardly different from
 myself,
 On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,
 Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,
 Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial,
 Depriving me of my best as for a purpose,
 Unbuttoning my clothes, holding me by the bare waist,
 Deluding my confusion with the calm of the sunlight and pasture-fields,
 Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,
 They bribed to swap off with touch and go and graze at the edges of me,
 No consideration, no regard for my draining strength or my anger,
 Fetching the rest of the herd around to enjoy them a while,
 Then all uniting to stand on a headland and worry me
 The sentries desert every other part of me,
 They have left me helpless to a red marauder,
 They all come to the headland to witness and assist against me.
 I am given up by traitors,
 I talk wildly, I have lost my wits, I and nobody else am the greatest traitor,
 I went myself first to the headland, my own hands carried me there

470

480

You villain touch! what are you doing? my breath is tight in its throat,
Unclench your floodgates, you are too much for me

490

29

Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp tooth'd touch!
Did it make you ache so, leaving me?

Parting track'd by arriving, perpetual payment of perpetual loan,
Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward

Sprouts take and accumulate, stand by the curb prolific and vital,
Landscapes projected masculine, full-sized and golden

30

All truths wait in all things,
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon,
The insignificant is as big to me as any,
(What is less or more than a touch?)

500

Logic and sermons never convince,
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul

(Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so,
Only what nobody denies is so)

A minute and a drop of me settle my brain,
I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps,
And a compend of compends is the meat of a man or woman,
And a summit and flower there is the feeling they have for each other,
And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson until it becomes omnific,
And until one and all shall delight us, and we them

510

31

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre for the highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,
And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any statue,
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal long-threaded moss, fruits, grains, esculent roots,
And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over
And have distanced what is behind me for good reason
But call any thing back again when I desire it

520

In vain the speeding or shyness,
In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat against my approach,
In vain the mastodon retreats beneath its own powder'd bones,
In vain objects stand leagues off and assume manifold shapes,
In vain the ocean settling in hollows and the great monsters lying low,

SONG OF MYSELF

In vain the buzzard houses herself with the sky,
In vain the snake slides through the creepers and logs, 530
In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods,
In vain the razor-bill'd auk sails far north to Labrador,
I follow quickly, I ascend to the nest in the fissure of the cliff.

32

I think I could turn and live with animals, they're so placid and self-contain'd,
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things, 540
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth

So they show their relations to me and I accept them,
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in their possession

I wonder where they get those tokens,
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them?

Myself moving forward then and now and forever,
Gathering and showing more always and with velocity,
Infinite and omnigenous, and the like of these among them,
Not too exclusive toward the reachers of my remembrancers, 550
Picking out here one that I love, and now go with him on brotherly terms.

A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive to my caresses,
Head high in the forehead, wide between the ears,
Limbs glossy and supple, tail dusting the ground,
Eyes full of sparkling wickedness, ears finely cut, flexibly moving.

His nostrils dilate as my heels embrace him,
His well-built limbs tremble with pleasure as we race around and return.
I but use you a minute, then I resign you, stallion,
Why do I need your paces when I myself out-gallop them?
Even as I stand or sit passing faster than you.

33

Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd at, 560
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,
What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars of the morning.

My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps,
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,
I am afoot with my vision

By the city's quadrangular houses—in log huts, camping with lumbermen,
Along the ruts of the turnpike, along the dry gulch and rivulet bed,

Weeding my onion patch or hoeing rows of carrots and parsnips, crossing savannas,
 trailing in forests,
 Prospecting, gold digging, girdling the trees of a new purchase, 570
 Scorch'd ankle deep by the hot sand, hauling my boat down the shallow river,
 Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead, where the buck turns
 furiously at the hunter,
 Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock, where the otter is feeding
 on fish,
 Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the bayou,
 Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey, where the beaver pats the mud
 with his paddle-shaped tail,
 Over the growing sugar, over the yellow-flower'd cotton plant, over the rice in its
 low moist field,
 Over the sharp-peak'd farm house, with its scallop'd scum and slender shoots from
 the gutters,
 Over the western persimmon, over the long leav'd corn, over the delicate blue-
 flower flax,
 Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and buzzer there with the rest,
 Over the dusky green of the rye as it nipples and shades in the breeze, 580
 Scaling mountains, pulling myself cautiously up, holding on by low scragged limbs,
 Walking the path worn in the grass and beat through the leaves of the brush,
 Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods and the wheat lot,
 Where the bat flies in the Seventh month eve, where the great gold bug drops
 through the dark,
 Where the brook puts out of the roots of the old tree and flows to the meadow,
 Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the tremulous shuddering of their
 hides,
 Where the cheese-cloth hangs in the kitchen, where androns straddle the hearth-
 slab, where cobwebs fall in festoons from the rafters,
 Where trip hammers crash, where the press is whirling its cylinders,
 Where the human heart beats with terrible throes under its ribs,
 Where the pear shaped balloon is floating aloft, (floating in it myself and looking
 composedly down,) 590
 Where the life car is drawn on the slip noose, where the heat hatches pale-green
 eggs in the dented sand,
 Where the she-whale swims with her calf and never forsakes it,
 Where the steam-ship trails hind ways its long pennant of smoke,
 Where the fin of the shark cuts like a black chip out of the water,
 Where the half-burn'd brig is riding on unknown currents,
 Where shells grow to her slimy deck, where the dead are corrupting below,
 Where the dense-starr'd flag is borne at the head of the regiments,
 Approaching Manhattan up by the long-stretching island,
 Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil over my countenance,
 Upon a door step, upon the horse block of hard wood outside, 600
 Upon the race course, or enjoying picnics or jugs or a good game of base-ball,
 At he festivals, with blackguard gibes, ironical license, bull-dances, drinking, laughter,
 At the cider-mill tasting the sweets of the brown mash, sucking the juice through a
 straw,

SONG OF MYSELF

At apple-peelings wanting kisses for all the red fruit I find,
 At musters, beach-parties, friendly bees, huskings, house-raising;
 Where the mocking-bird sounds his delicious gurgles, cackles, screams, weeps,
 Where the hay-rick stands in the barn-yard, where the dry-stalks are scatter'd, where
 the brood-cow waits in the hovel,
 Where the bull advances to do his masculine work, where the stud to the mare,
 where the cock is treading the hen,
 Where the heifers browse, where geese nip their food with short jerks,
 Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless and lonesome prairie, 610
 Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the square miles far and near,
 Where the humming-bird shimmers, where the neck of the long-lived swan is
 curving and winding,
 Where the laughing-gull scoots by the shore, where she laughs her near-human laugh,
 Where bee-hives range on a gray bench in the garden half hid by the high weeds,
 Where band-neck'd partridges roost in a ring on the ground with their heads out,
 Where burial coaches enter the arch'd gates of a cemetery,
 Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and iced trees,
 Where the yellow-crown'd heron comes to the edge of the marsh at night and feeds
 upon small crabs,
 Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools the warm noon,
 Where the katy-did works her chromatic reed on the walnut-tree over the well, 620
 Through patches of citrons and cucumbers with silver-wired leaves,
 Through the salt-lick or orange glade, or under conical firs,
 Through the gymnasium, through the curtain'd saloon, through the office or public
 hall,
 Pleas'd with the native and pleas'd with the foreign, pleas'd with the new and old,
 Pleas'd with the homely woman as well as the handsome,
 Pleas'd with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet and talks melodiously,
 Pleas'd with the tune of the choir of the whitewash'd church,
 Pleas'd with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist preacher, impress'd
 seriously at the camp-meeting;
 Looking in at the shop-windows of Broadway the whole forenoon, flattening the flesh
 of my nose on the thick plate glass,
 Wandering the same afternoon with my face turn'd up to the clouds, or down a
 lane or along the beach, 630
 My right and left arms round the sides of two friends, and I in the middle,
 Coming home with the silent and dark-cheek'd bush-boy, (behind me he rides at
 the drape of the day,)
 Far from the settlements studying the print of animals' feet, or the moccasin print,
 By the cot in the hospital reaching lemonade to a feverish patient,
 Nigh the coffin'd corpse when all is still, examining with a candle,
 Voyaging to every port to dicker and adventure,
 Hurrying with the modern crowd as eager and fickle as any,
 Hot toward one I hate, ready in my madness to knife him,
 Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts gone from me a long while,
 Walking the old hills of Judæa with the beautiful gentle God by my side, 640
 Speeding through space, speeding through heaven and the stars,
 Speeding amid the seven satellites and the broad ring, and the diameter of eighty
 thousand miles,

Speeding with tail'd meteors, throwing fire balls like the rest,
 Carrying the crescent child that carries its own full mother in its belly,
 Storming, enjoying, planning, loving cautioning,
 Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,
 I tread day and night such roads

I visit the orchards of spheres and look at the product,
 And look at quintillions ripen'd and look at quintillions green

I fly those flights of a fluid and swallowing soul,
 My course runs below the soundings of plummets

650

I help myself to material and immaterial,
 No guard can shut me off, no law prevent me

34

Now I tell what I knew in Texas in my early youth,
 (I tell not the fall of Alamo,
 Not one escaped to tell the fall of Alamo,⁹
 The hundred and fifty are dumb yet at Alamo,)
 'Tis the tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred and twelve young man¹⁰

Retreating they had form'd in a hollow square with their baggage for breastworks,
 Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemy's, nine times their number, was
 the price they took in advance,
 Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone,
 They treated for an honorable capitulation, receiv'd writing and seal, gave up their
 arms and march'd back prisoners of war¹¹

660

They were the glory of the race of rangers,
 Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,
 Large, turbulent, generous, handsome, proud, and affectionate,
 Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,
 Not a single one over thirty years of age

The second First-day morning they were brought out in squads and massacred, it
 was beautiful early summer,
 The work commenced about five o'clock and was over by eight

None obey'd the command to kneel,
 Some made a mad and helpless rush, some stood stark and straight,
 A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart, the living and dead lay together,
 The maim'd and mangled dug in the dirt, the new-comers saw them there,
 Some half-kill'd attempted to crawl away,
 These were despatch'd with bayonets or batter'd with the blunts of muskets
 A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till two more came to release him,
 The three were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood

670

⁹ Battle of San Antonio in 1836, during war for Texan Independence

¹⁰ Texan troops captured by the Mexicans were massacred at the order of General Santa Anna on March 27, 1836, near Goliad

¹¹ The surrender preceding the massacre mentioned above General Fannin was retreating after several tactical blunders

SONG OF MYSELF

At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies;
That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and twelve young men.

39

The friendly and flowing savage, who is he? 680
Is he waiting for civilization, or past it and mastering it?

Is he some Southwesterner rais'd out-doors? is he Kanadian?
Is he from the Mississippi country? Iowa, Oregon, California?
The mountains? prairie-life, bush-life? or sailor from the sea?

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him,
They desire he should like them, touch them, speak to them, stay with them.

Behavior lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass, uncomb'd head, laughter,
and naïveté,

Slow-stepping feet, common features, common modes and emanations,
They descend in new forms from the tips of his fingers,
They are wafted with the odor of his body or breath, they fly out of the glance of
his eyes. 690

40

Flaunt of the sunshine I need not your bask—he over!
You light surfaces only, I force surfaces and depths also.

Earth! you seem to look for something at my hands,
Say, old top-knot, what do you want?

Man or woman, I might tell how I like you, but cannot,
And might tell what it is in me and what it is in you, but cannot,
And might tell that pining I have, that pulse of my nights and days.

Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity,
When I give I give myself

You there, impotent, loose in the knees, 700
Open your scarf'd chops till I blow grit within you,
Spread your palms and lift the flaps of your pockets,
I am not to be denied, I compel, I have stores plenty and to spare,
And any thing I have I bestow.

I do not ask who you are. that is not important to me,
You can do nothing and be nothing but what I will infold you.

To cotton-field drudge or cleaner of privies I lean,
On his right cheek I put the family kiss,
And in my soul I swear I never will deny him.

On women fit for conception I start bigger and nimbler babes, 710
(This day I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant republics.)

To any one dying, thither I speed and twist the knob of the door,
Turn the bed clothes toward the foot of the bed,
Let the physician and the priest go home

I seize the descending man and raise him with resistless will,
O despairer, here is my neck,
By God, you shall not go down! hang your whole weight upon me

I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up,
Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force,
Lovers of me, bafflers of graves

720

Sleep—I and they keep guard all night,
Not doubt, not disease shall dare to lay finger upon you,
I have embraced you, and' henceforth possess you to myself,
And when you rise in the morning you will find what I tell you is so.

41

I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their backs,
And for strong upright men I bring yet more needed help

I heard what was said of the universe,
Heard it and heard it of several thousand years,
It is middling well as far as it goes—but is that all?

Magnifying and applying come I,
Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,¹²
Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,
Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his grandson,
Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha,
In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the crucifix engraved,
With Odin and the hideous faced Mexitli and every idol and image,
Taking them all for what they are worth and not a cent more,
Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days,
(They bore mites as for unfledg'd buds who have now to rise and fly and sing for themselves,)

730

Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in myself, bestowing them
freely on each man and woman I see,
Discovering as much or more in a framer framing a house,
Putting higher claims for him there with his roll'd-up sleeves driving the mallet
and chisel,
Not objecting to special revelations, considering a curl of smoke or a hair on the
back of my hand just as curious as any revelation,
Lads ahold of fire engines and hook-and ladder ropes no less to me than the gods
of the antique wars,
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,
Their brawn limbs passing safe over char'd laths, their white foreheads whole and
unhurt out of the flames,

740

¹² Whitman dreamed of the founding of a new eclectic religion, combining features of all religions—pagan, Hebraic, and Christian. See G. L. Sixbey,

"Chanting the Square Deific—A Study in Whitman's Religion," *American Literature* vol. IX, pp. 171-95 (May, 1937)

SONG OF MYSELF

By the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple interceding for every person born,
Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty angels with shirts bagg'd
out at their waists,
The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins past and to come,
Selling all he possesses, traveling on foot to fee lawyers for his brother and sit by
him while he is tried for forgery, 750
What was strewn in the amplest strewing the square rod about me, and not filling
the square rod then,
The bull and the bug never worshipp'd half enough,
Dung and dirt more admirable than was dream'd,
The supernatural of no account, myself waiting my time to be one of the supremes,
The day getting ready for me when I shall do as much good as the best, and be as
prodigious,
By my life-lumps! becoming already a creator,
Putting myself here and now to the ambush'd womb of the shadows.

42

A call in the midst of the crowd,
My own voice, orotund sweeping and final
Come my children, 760
Come my boys and girls, my women, household and intimates,
Now the performer launches his nerve, he has pass'd his prelude on the reeds within.
Easily written loose-finger'd chords—I feel the thrum of your climax and close.
My head slues round on my neck,
Music rolls, but not from the organ,
Folks are around me, but they are no household of mine.
Ever the hard unsunk ground,
Ever the eaters and drinkers, ever the upward and downward sun, ever the air and
the ceaseless tides,
Ever myself and my neighbors, refreshing, wicked, real,
Ever the old inexplicable query, ever that thorn'd thumb, that breath of itches
and thirsts, 770
Ever the vexer's *hoot! hoot!* till we find where the sly one hides and bring him forth,
Ever love, ever the sobbing liquid of life,
Ever the bandage under the chin, ever the trestles of death
Here and there with dimes on the eyes walking, .
To feed the greed of the belly the brains liberally spooning,
Tickets buying, taking, selling, but in to the feast never once going,
Many sweating, ploughing, thrashing, and then the chaff for payment receiving,
A few idly owning, and they the wheat continually claiming
This is the city and I am one of the citizens,
Whatever interests the rest interests me, politics, wars, markets, newspapers, schools, 780
The mayor and councils, banks, tariffs, steamships, factories, stocks, stores, real estate
and personal estate.

The little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars and tail'd coats,
 I am aware who they are, (they are positively not worms or fleas,)
 I acknowledge the duplicates of myself, the weakest and shallowest is deathless
 with me,

What I do and say the same waits for them,
 Every thought that flounders in me the same flounders in them

I know perfectly well my own egotism,
 Know my omnivorous lines and must not write any less,
 And would fetch you whoever you are flush with myself

Not words of routine this song of mine, 790
 But abruptly to question, to leap beyond yet nearer bring,
 This printed and bound book—but the printer and the printing office boy?
 The well taken photographs—but your wife or friend close and solid in your arms?
 The black ship mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in her turrets—but the pluck of
 the captain and engineers?
 In the houses the dishes and fare and furniture—but the host and hostess, and
 the look out of their eyes?
 The sky up there—yet here or next door, or across the way?
 The saints and sages in history—but you yourself?
 Sermons, creeds, theology—but the fathomless human brain,
 And what is reason? and what is love? and what is life?

43

I do not despise your priests, all time, the world over, 800
 My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,
 Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between ancient and modern,
 Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand years,
 Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the gods, saluting the sun,
 Making a fetch of the first rock or stump, powowing with sticks in the circle
 of obis,¹³
 Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the idols,
 Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession,¹⁴ rapt and austere in the
 woods a gymnosophist,¹⁵
 Drinking mead from the skull cup,¹⁶ to Shastas¹⁷ and Vedas¹⁸ admirant, minding
 the Koran,
 Walking the teokallis,¹⁹ spotted with gore from the stone and knife, beating the
 serpent-skin drum,
 Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified, knowing assuredly that
 he is divine, 810
 To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or sitting patiently in a pew,
 Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis, or waiting dead-like till my spirit arouses
 me,
 Looking forth on pavement and land, or outside of pavement and land,
 Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits

¹³ African incantation¹⁴ Early Greek religion¹⁵ Sect of ascetic philosophers found in India by Alexander the Great¹⁶ Scandinavian or Anglo Saxon pagan custom¹⁷ Indians of Western United States Perhaps confused with sacred writings of India¹⁸ The Vedas are a section of the Veda, body of sacred books of Hindu religion¹⁹ Pyramidal mound in Mexico

SONG OF MYSELF

One of that centripetal and centrifugal gang I turn and talk like a man leaving
charges before a journey

Down-hearted doubters dull and excluded,
Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected, dishearten'd, atheistical,
I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment, doubt, despair and unbelief.

How the flukes splash!
How they contort rapid as lightning, with spasms and spouts of blood! 820

Be at peace bloody flukes of doubters and sullen mopers,
I take my place among you as much as among any,
The past is the push of you, me, all, precisely the same,
And what is yet untried and afterward is for you, me, all precisely the same.

I do not know what is untried and afterward,
But I know it will in its turn prove sufficient, and cannot fail

Each who passes is consider'd, each who stops is consider'd, not a single one can
it fail.

It cannot fail the young man who died and was buried,
Nor the young woman who died and was put by his side,
Nor the little child that peep'd in at the door, and then drew back and was never
seen again, 830
Nor the old man who has lived without purpose, and feels it with bitterness worse
than gall,
Nor him in the poor house tubercled by rum and the bad disorder,
Nor the numberless slaughter'd and wreck'd, nor the brutish koboo call'd the
ordure of humanity,
Nor the sacs merely floating with open mouths for food to slip in,
Nor any thing in the earth, or down in the oldest graves of the earth,
Nor any thing in the myriads of spheres, nor the myriads of myriads that inhabit
them,
Nor the present, nor the least wisp that is known.

44

It is time to explain myself—let us stand up.

What is known I strip away,
I launch all men and women forward with me into the Unknown. 840

The clock indicates the moment—but what does eternity indicate?

We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and summers,
There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

Births have brought us richness and variety,
And other births will bring us richness and variety.

I do not call one greater and one smaller,
That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, my brother, my sister?
I am sorry for you, they are not murderous or jealous upon me,

All has been gentle with me, I keep no account with lamentation,
(What have I to do with lamentation?) 850

I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of things to be

My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between the steps,
All below duly travel'd, and still I mount and mount

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even there,
I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic mist,
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon

Long I was hugg'd close—long and long 860

Immense have been the preparations for me,
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me

Cycles ferned my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen,
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me

Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay it
For it the nebula cohered to an orb,
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance, 870
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and deposited it with care

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight me,
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul

45

O span of youth! ever push'd elasticity!
O manhood, balanced, florid and full

My lovers suffocate me,
Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,
Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming naked to me at night,
Crying by day *Ahoy!* from the rocks of the river, swinging and chirping over my
head,
Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled underbrush, 880
Lighting on every moment of my life,
Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses,
Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts and giving them to be mine

Old age superbly rising! O welcome, ineffable grace of dying days!

Every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges what grows after and out
of itself,
And the dark hush promulges as much as any

SONG OF MYSELF

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,
And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but the rim of the farther
systems

Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,
Outward and outward and forever outward

890

My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside them.

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their surfaces, were this moment
reduced back to a pallid float, it would not avail in the long run,
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and farther

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues, do not hazard the span
or make it impatient,
They are but parts, any thing is but a part.

See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that,
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.

900

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be there.

46

I know I have the best of time and space, and was never measured and never will
be measured

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut from the woods,
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,
My left hand hooking you round the waist,
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the public road.

910

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,
You must travel it for yourself.

It is not far, it is within reach,
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and did not know,
Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land.

Shoulder your duds dear son, and I will mine, and let us hasten forth,
Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as we go.

920

If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff of your hand on my hip,
And in due time you shall repay the same service to me,
For after we start we never lie by again

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at the crowded heaven,
 And I said to my spirit *When we become the enfolders of those orbs,²⁰ and the
 pleasure and knowledge of every thing in them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied
 then?*

And my spirit said *No, we but level that lift to pass and continue beyond*

You are also asking me questions and I hear you,
 I answer that I cannot answer, you must find out for yourself

Sit a while dear son,
 Here are biscuits to eat and here is milk to drink, 930
 But as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet clothes, I kiss you with a
 good by kiss and open the gate for your egress hence

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,
 Now I wash the gum from your eyes,
 You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of every moment of your life

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,
 Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,
 To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me, shout, and laughingly
 dash with your hair

47

I am the teacher of athletes,
 He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves the width of my own,
 He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher 940

The boy I love, the same becomes a man not through derived power, but in his own
 right,
 Wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear,
 Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,
 Unrequited love or a slight cutting him worse than sharp steel cuts,
 First-rate to ride to fight, to hit the bull's eye, to sail a skiff, to sing a song or play
 on the banjo,
 Preferring scars and the beard and faces pitted with small-pox over all latherers,
 And those well-tann'd to those that keep out of the sun

I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me?
 I follow you whoever you are from the present hour,
 My words itch at your ears till you understand them 950

I do not say these things for a dollar or to fill up the time while I wait for a boat,
 (It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the tongue of you,
 Tied in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosen'd)

I swear I will never again mention love or death inside a house,
 And I swear I will never translate myself at all, only to him or her who privately
 staves with me in the open air

²⁰ A transmigrational doctrine

SONG OF MYSELF

If you would understand me go to the heights or water-shore,
The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion of waves a key,
The maul, the oar, the hand-saw, second my words

No shutter'd room or school can commune with me,
But roughs and little children better than they 960

The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall take me with him all day,
The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the sound of my voice,
In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen and seamen and love them.

The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,
On the night ere the pending battle many seek me, and I do not fail them,
On that solemn night (it may be their last) those that know me seek me

My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down alone in his blanket,
The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt of his wagon,
The young mother and old mother comprehend me, 970
The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and forget where they are,
They and all would resume what I have told them

48

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,
And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own funeral drest in
his shroud,
And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick of the earth,
And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod confounds the learning of
all times,
And there is no trade or employment but the young man following it may become a
hero,

And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd universe, 980
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and composed before a
million universes.

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and about death.)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least,
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by God's name, 990
And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go,
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

49

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to try to alarm me

To his work without flinching the accoucheur comes,
I see the elder-hand pressing receiving supporting,
I recline by the sills of the exquisite flexible doors,
And mark the outlet, and mark the relief and escape

And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but that does not offend me,
I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,
I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of melons 1000

And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before)

I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,
O suns—O grass of graves—O perpetual transfers and promotions,
If you do not say any thing how can I say any thing?

Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,
Of the moon that descends the steeps of the soughing twilight,
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk—toss on the black stems that decay in the muck,
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs

I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night, 1010
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sunbeams reflected,
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring great or small

50

There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know it is in me

Wrench'd and sweaty—calm and cool then my body becomes,
I sleep—I sleep long

I do not know it—it is without name—it is a word unsaid,
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me

Perhaps I might tell more Outlines! I plead for my brothers and sisters 1020

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal life—it is Happiness

51

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied them,
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future

Listener up there! what have you to confide to me?
Look in my face while I snuff the side of evening,
(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute longer)

THERE WAS A CHILD WENT FORTH

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes) 1030
I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-slab
Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through with his supper?
Who wishes to walk with me?
Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too late?

52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my
loitering
I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.
The last scud of day holds back for me,
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds,
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk 1040
I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags
I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.
You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood
Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you 1050
1855 1881

There Was a Child Went Forth ²¹

There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass and white and red morning-glories, and white and red clover, and the song
of the phœbe-bird,
And the Third-month lambs and the sow's pink-faint litter, and the mare's foal and
the cow's calf,

²¹ Most biographers accept this poem on the influence of natural objects on the life of a child as autobiographical, though Whitman denied that he

had his own parents in mind in this description of the loving mother and the crabbed father. Both portrayals, however, fit the known facts.

And the noisy brood of the barnyard or by the mire of the pond side,
 And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there, and the beautiful
 curious liquid,
 And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads, all became part of him 10

The field-sprouts of Fourth month and Fifth month became part of him,
 Winter-grain sprouts and those of the light yellow corn, and the esculent roots of
 the garden,
 And the apple-trees cover'd with blossoms and the fruit afterward, and wood berries,
 and the commonest weeds by the road,
 And the old drunkard staggering home from the outhouse of the tavern whence he
 had lately risen,
 And the schoolmistress that pass'd on her way to the school,
 And the friendly boys that pass'd, and the quarrelsome boys,
 And the tidy and fresh cheek'd girls, and the barefoot negro boy and girl,
 And all the changes of city and country wherever he went

His own parents, he that had father'd him and she that had conceiv'd him in her
 womb and birth'd him

They gave this child more of themselves than that, 20
 They gave him afterward every day, they became part of him

The mother at home quietly placing the dishes on the supper table,
 The mother with mild words, clean her cap and gown, a wholesome odor falling off
 her person and clothes as she walks by,
 The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger'd, unjust,
 The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain the crafty lure,
 The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture, the yearning and
 swelling heart,
 Affection that will not be gainsay'd, the sense of what is real, the thought if after
 all it should prove unreal,
 The doubts of day time and the doubts of night-time, the curious whether and how,
 Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and specks?
 Men and women crowding fast in the streets, if they are not flashes and specks
 what are they? 30

The streets themselves and the façades of houses, and goods in the windows,
 Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank'd wharves, the huge crossing at the ferries,
 The village on the highland seen from afar at sunset, the river between,
 Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling on roofs and gables of white or brown
 two miles off,
 The schooner near by sleepily dropping down the tide, the little boat slack tow'd
 astern,
 The hurrying tumbling waves, quick broken crests, slapping,
 The strata of color'd clouds the long bar of moon-tint away solitary by itself, the
 spread of puny it lies motionless in,
 The horizon's edge, the flying sea crow, the fragrance of salt marsh and shore mud,
 These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes, and
 will always go forth every day

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

*Song of the Open Road*²²

1

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road

The earth, that is sufficient,
I do not want the constellations any nearer,
I know they are very well where they are,
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

10

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,
I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever I go,
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,
I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in return)

2

You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are not all that is here,
I believe that much unseen is also here.

Here the profound lesson of reception, nor preference nor denial,
The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas'd, the illiterate person, are
not denied;

The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar's tramp, the drunkard's
stagger, the laughing party of mechanics,
The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the fop, the eloping couple,
The early market-man, the hearse, the moving of furniture into the town, the return
back from the town,

20

They pass, I also pass, any thing passes, none can be interdicted,
None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

3

You air that serves me with breath to speak!
You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and give them shape!
You light that wraps me and all things in delicate equable showers!
You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides!
I believe you are latent with unseen existences, you are so dear to me

You flagg'd walks of the cities! you strong curbs at the edges!
You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves! you timber-lined sides! you distant
ships!

30

²² This poem is typical of the buoyant spirit of the 1856 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. The poem is highly symbolical. Whitman tramped with his poetic imagination; he was not a great hiker.

You rows of houses! you window pierc'd façades! you roofs!
 You porches and entrances! you copings and iron guards!
 You windows whose transparent shells might expose so much!
 You doors and ascending steps! you arches!
 You gray stones of interminable pavements! you trodden crossings!
 From all that has touch'd you I believe you have imparted to yourselves, and now
 would impart the same secretly to me,
 From the living and the dead you have peopled your impassive surfaces, and the
 spirits thereof would be evident and amicable with me

4

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,
 The picture alive, every part in its best light, 40
 The music falling in where it is wanted, and stopping where it is not wanted,
 The cheerful voice of the public road, the gay fresh sentiment of the road

O highway I travel, do you say to me *Do not leave me?*
 Do you say *Venture not—if you leave me you are lost?*
 Do you say *I am already prepared, I am well-beaten and undenied, adhere to me?*
 O public road, I say back I am not afraid to leave you, yet I love you,
 You express me better than I can express myself,
 You shall be more to me than my poem

I think heroic deeds were all concern'd in the open air, and all free poems also,
 I think I could stop here myself and do miracles, 50
 I think whatever I shall meet on the road I shall like, and whoever beholds me
 shall like me,
 I think whoever I see must be happy

5

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,
 Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,
 Listening to others, considering well what they say,
 Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
 Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me

I inhale great draughts of space,
 The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south are mine

I am larger, better than I thought, 60
 I did not know I held so much goodness

All seems beautiful to me,
 I can repeat over to men and women You have done such good to me I would do
 the same to you,
 I will recruit for myself and you as I go,
 I will scatter myself among men and women as I go,
 I will toss a new gladness and roughness among them,
 Whoever denies me it shall not trouble me,
 Whoever accepts me he or she shall be blessed and shall bless me

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

6

Now if a thousand perfect men were to appear it would not amaze me,
Now if a thousand beautiful forms of women appear'd it would not astonish me. 70

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth

Here a great personal deed has room,
(Such a deed seizes upon the hearts of the whole race of men,
Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms law and mocks all authority and all
argument against it)

Here is the test of wisdom,
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another not having it,
Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own proof, 80
Applies to all stages and objects and qualities and is content,
Is the certainty of the reality and immortality of things, and the excellence of
things;
Something there is in the float of the sight of things that provokes it out of the soul

Now I re-examine philosophies and religions,
They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet not prove at all under the spacious clouds
and along the landscape and flowing currents

Here is realization,
Here is a man tallied—he realizes here what he has in him,
The past, the future, majesty, love—if they are vacant of you, you are vacant of
them

Only the kernel of every object nourishes,
Where is he who tears off the husks for you and me?
Where is he that undoes stratagems and envelopes for you and me? 90

Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously fashion'd, it is apropos;
Do you know what it is as you pass to be loved by strangers?
Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls?

7

Here is the efflux of the soul,
The efflux of the soul comes from within through embower'd gates, ever provoking
questions,
These yearnings why are they? these thoughts in the darkness why are they?
Why are there men and women that while they are nigh me the sunlight expands
my blood?
Why when they leave me do my pennants of joy sink flat and lank?
Why are there trees I never walk under but large and melodious thoughts
descend upon me?

(I think they hang there winter and summer on those trees and always drop fruit
as I pass;) 100
What is it I interchange so suddenly with strangers?

What with some driver as I ride on the scat by his side?
 What with some fisherman drawing his seine by the shore as I walk by and pause?
 What gives me to be free to a woman's and man's good will?
 what gives them to be free to mine?

8

The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is happiness,
 I think it pervades the open air, waiting at all times,
 Now it flows unto us, we are rightly charged

Here rises the fluid and attaching character,
 The fluid and attaching character is the freshness and sweetness of man and woman,
 (The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher and sweeter every day out of the roots
 of themselves, than it sprouts fresh and sweet continually out of itself) 110
 Toward the fluid and attaching character exudes the sweat of the love of young
 and old,
 From it falls distill'd the charm that mocks beauty and attainments,
 Toward it heaves the shuddering longing ache of contact

9

Allons! ²³ whoever you are come travel with me!
 Traveling with me you find what never tires

The earth never tires,
 The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first, Nature is rude and incompre-
 hensible at first,
 Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine things well envelop'd,
 I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful than words can tell

Allons! we must not stop here, 120
 However sweet these laid-up stores, however convenient this dwelling we cannot
 remain here,
 However shelter'd this port and however calm these waters we must not anchor here,
 However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us we are permitted to receive .
 it but a little while

10

Allons! the inducements shall be greater,
 We will sail pathless and wild seas,
 We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and the Yankee clipper speeds by
 under full sail

Allons! with power, liberty, the earth, the elements,
 Health, defiance, gayety, self-esteem, curiosity,
 Allons! from all formules!
 From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests ²⁴

130

²³ Let us go, or let us march Cf. the National Anthem of France, 'Allons, enfants de la patrie' — Come, children of our country

²⁴ One of the earlier influences on Whitman was the anticlericalism of the French Revolutionary writers, especially Count Volney

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

The stale cadaver blocks up the passage—the burial waits no longer.

Allons! yet take warning!

He traveling with me needs the best blood, thews, endurance,
None may come to the trial till he or she bring courage and health,
Come not here if you have already spent the best of yourself,
Only those may come who come in sweet and determin'd bodies,
No diseas'd person, no rum-drinker or venereal taint is permitted here.

(I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes,
We convince by our presence)

11

Listen! I will be honest with you, 140
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough new prizes,
These are the days that must happen to you
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve,
You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd, you hardly settle yourself
to satisfaction before you are call'd by an irresistible call to depart,
You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and mockings of those who remain
behind you,
What beckonings of love you receive you shall only answer with passionate kisses
of parting,
You shall not allow the hold of those who spread their reach'd hands toward you.

12

Allons! after the great Companions, and to belong to them!
They too are on the road—they are the swift and majestic men—they are the 150
greatest women,
Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas,
Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a mile of land,
Habitué of many distant countries, habitué of far-distant dwellings,
Trusters of men and women, observers of cities, solitary toilers,
Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blossoms, shells of the shore,
Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of brides, tender helpers of children, bearers of
children,
Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping graves, lowerers-down of coffins,
Journeyers over consecutive seasons, over the years, the curious years each emerging
from that which preceded it,
Journeyers as with companions, namely their own diverse phases,
Forth-steppers from the latent unrealized baby-days, 160
Journeyers gayly with their own youth, journeyers with their bearded and
well-gran'd manhood,
Journeyers with their womanhood, ample, unsurpass'd, content,
Journeyers with their own sublime old age of manhood or womanhood,
Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the haughty breadth of the universe,
Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-by freedom of death.

Allons! to that which is endless as it was beginningless,
 To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights,
 To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and nights they tend to,
 Again to merge them in the start of superior journeys,
 To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it and pass it, 170
 To conceive no time, however distant, but what you may reach it and pass it,
 To look up or down no road but it stretches and waits for you, however long but it
 stretches and waits for you,
 To see no being, not God's or any, but you also go thither,
 To see no possession but you may possess it, enjoying all without labor or purchase,
 abstracting the feast yet not abstracting one particle of it,
 To take the best of the farmer's farm and the rich man's elegant villa, and the
 chaste blessings of the well married couple, and the fruits of orchards and
 flowers of gardens,
 To take to your use out of the compact cities as you pass through,
 To carry buildings and streets with you afterward wherever you go,
 To gather the minds of men out of their brains as you encounter them, to gather the
 love out of their hearts,
 To take your lovers on the road with you, for all that you leave them behind you,
 To know the universe itself as a road, as many roads, as roads for traveling souls ²⁵ 180

All parts away for the progress of souls,
 All religion, all solid things, arts, governments—all that was or is appaent upon this
 globe or any globe, falls into niches and corners before the procession of souls
 along the grand roads of the universe

Of the progress of the souls of men and women along the grand roads of the universe,
 all other progress is the needed emblem and sustenance

Forever alive, forever forward,
 Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled, mad, turbulent, feeble, dissatisfied,
 Desperate, proud, fond, sick, accepted by men, rejected by men,
 They go! they go! I know that they go, but I know not where they go,
 But I know that they go toward the best—toward something great

Whoever you are, come forth! or man or woman come forth!
 You must not stay sleeping and dallying there in the house, though you built it, or
 though it has been built for you 190

Out of the dark confinement! out from behind the screen!
 It is useless to protest, I know all and expose it

Behold through you as bad as the rest,
 Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping, of people,
 Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of those wash'd and trumm'd faces,
 Behold a secret silent loathing and despair

²⁵ On Whitman's symbolical use of the journey theme, see Gav Wilson Allen, 'Walt Whitman's Long Journey Motif,' *Journal of English and Ger-*

manic Philology, vol XXXVIII, pp 76-95 (January, 1939)

CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY

No husband, no wife, no friend, trusted to hear the confession,
 Another self, a duplicate of every one, skulking and hiding it goes,
 Formless and wordless through the streets of the cities, polite and bland in the
 parlors,
 In the cars of railroads, in steamboats, in the public assembly, 200
 Home to the houses of men and women, at the table, in the bedroom, everywhere,
 Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright, death under the breast-bones,
 hell under the skull-bones,
 Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons and artificial flowers,
 Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not a syllable of itself,
 Speaking of any thing else but never of itself.

14

Allons! through struggles and wars!
 The goal that was named cannot be countermanded.

Have the past struggles succeeded?
 What has succeeded? yourself? your nation? Nature?
 Now understand me well—it is provided in the essence of things that from any
 fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a
 greater struggle necessary. 210

My call is the call of battle, I nourish active rebellion,
 He going with me must go well arm'd,
 He going with me goes often with spare diet, poverty, angry enemies, desertions.

15

Allons! the road is before us!
 It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried it well—be not detain'd!
 Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the book on the shelf unopen'd!
 Let the tools remain in the workshop! let the money remain unearn'd!
 Let the school stand! mind not the cry of the teacher!
 Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let the lawyer plead in the court, and the
 judge expound the law.

Camerado, I give you my hand! 220
 I give you my love more precious than money,
 I give you myself before preaching or law,
 Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?
 Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?
 1856 1881

*Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*²⁶

1

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!
 Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you also face to face.

²⁶ Called "Sun-Down Poem" in the 1856 edition; present title used in 1860.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how curious you are to me!
 On the ferry boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning home, are more
 curious to me than you suppose,
 And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me, and more
 in my meditations, than you might suppose

2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours of the day,
 The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disintegrated, every one
 disintegrated yet part of the scheme,
 The similitudes of the past and those of the future,
 The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings, on the walk in the
 street and the passage over the river,
 The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far away, 10
 The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them,
 The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others
 Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to shore,
 Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,
 Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the heights of
 Brooklyn to the south and east,
 Others will see the islands large and small,
 Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high,
 A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them,
 Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood tide, the falling-back to the sea
 of the ebb-tide

3

It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not, 20
 I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations
 hence,
 Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,
 Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd,
 Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was
 refresh'd,
 Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift current, I stood
 yet was hurried,
 Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the thick stemm'd pipes of
 steamboats, I look'd
 I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,
 Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in the air floating with
 motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,
 Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies and left the rest in strong
 shadow,
 Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward the south, 30
 Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,
 Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,
 Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape of my head in the
 sunlit water,

CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY

Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-westward,
Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,
Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships at anchor,
The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender serpentine
pennants,
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their pilot-houses,
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl of the wheels,
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the frolicsome crests and
glistening,
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls of the granite
storehouses by the docks,
On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely flank'd on each side by
the barges, the hay-boat, the belated lighter,
On the neighboring shore the fires from the foundry chimneys burning high and
glaringly into the night,
Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and yellow light over the tops
of houses, and down into the clefts of streets

40

4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,
I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and rapid river,
The men and women I saw were all near to me,
Others the same—others who look back on me because I look'd forward to them,
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night)

50

5

What is it then between us?
What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?
Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not,
I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,
I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in the waters around it,
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,
In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came upon me,
In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they came upon me,
I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,
I too had receiv'd identity by my body,
That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew I should be of
my body.

60

6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,
The dark threw its patches down upon me also,
The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,
My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in reality meagre?

Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,
 I am he who knew what it was to be evil, 70
 I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,
 Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,
 Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,
 Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant,
 The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,
 The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish, not wanting,
 Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of these wanting,
 Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,
 Was call'd by my highest name by clear loud voices of young men as they saw me
 approaching or passing,
 Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning of their flesh against
 me as I sat, 80
 Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly, yet never told them
 a word,
 Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing, gnawing, sleeping,
 Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,
 The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as great as we like,
 Or as small as we like, or both great and small

7

Closer yet I approach you,
 What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—I laid in my stores in
 advance,
 I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born
 Who was to know what should come home to me?
 Who knows but I am enjoying this? 90
 Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as looking at you now, for all you
 cannot see me?

8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than mast-hemm'd
 Manhattan?
 River and sunset and scallop edg'd waves of flood-tide?
 The sea gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the twilight, and the belated
 light?
 What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with voices I love call
 me promptly and loudly by my highest name as I approach?
 What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man that looks in
 my face?
 Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?
 We understand then do we not?
 What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not accepted?
 What the study could not teach—what the preaching could not accomplish is
 accomplish'd, is it not? 100

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide!
 Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!
 Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendor me, or the men and
 women generations after me!
 Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!
 Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta! stand up, beautiful hills of Brooklyn!
 Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and answers!
 Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!
 Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street or public assembly!
 Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call me by my highest name!
 Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor or actress! 110
 Play the old role, the role that is great or small according as one makes it!
 Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown ways be looking
 upon you,
 Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly, yet haste with the
 hasting current,
 Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high in the air,
 Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it till all downcast eyes have
 time to take it from you!
 Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or any one's head, in the
 sunlit water!
 Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-sail'd schooners, sloops,
 lighters!
 Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lower'd at sunset!
 Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows at nightfall! cast red
 and yellow light over the tops of the houses!
 Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are, 120
 You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,
 About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung our divinest aromas,
 Thrive, cities—bring your freight, bring your shows, ample and sufficient rivers,
 Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual,
 Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting.

 You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers,
 We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate henceforward,
 Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves from us,
 We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you permanently within us,
 We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you also, 130
 You furnish your parts toward eternity,
 Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.
 1856 1881

*On the Beach at Night Alone*²⁷

On the beach at night alone,
 As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,
 As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the clef of the universes
 and of the future

A vast similitude interlocks all,
 All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets,
 All distances of place however wide,
 All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
 All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or in different worlds,
 All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes, the brutes,
 All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages, 10
 All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any globe,
 All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
 This vast similitude spins them, and always has spann'd,
 And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them
 1856 1881

*Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking*²⁸

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
 Out of the mocking bird's throat, the musical shuttle,
 Out of the Ninth month midnight,
 Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the child leaving his bed
 wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
 Down from the shower'd halo,
 Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if they were alive,
 Out from the patches of briars and blackberries,
 From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,
 From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and fallings I heard,
 From under that yellow half-moon late risen and swollen as if with tears, 10
 From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the mist,
 From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,
 From the myriad thence-arous'd words,
 From the word stronger and more delicious than any,
 From such as now they start the scene revisiting,
 As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,

²⁷ Published in the 1856 edition as 'Clef Poem,' i.e. a key to the poet's philosophy, and reprinted in the 1860 edition. In this early version it was thirty-four lines in length. In 1867 Whitman reduced the poem to its present fourteen lines, thus improving its unity. But its happy, confident tone expresses the mood of the poet in 1856.

²⁸ This poem has undergone many changes, in title wording, and length. First called 'A Child's Reminiscence' in periodical publication, it was renamed 'A Word Out of the Sea' in the third

(1860) *Leaves of Grass* and finally the present title was adopted in 1871. Most biographers regard the poem as a thinly veiled allusion to a personal experience but who the lover that died was (if there was such a lover) no one knows. Whatever the personal background, all critics agree that it is one of Whitman's greatest poems, perhaps second only to 'When I Was Last in the Doomed Bloom'd.' It is significant that this poet's most lyrical expression is inspired by the subject of death.

OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING

Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,
 A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
 Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
 I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter, 20
 Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,
 A reminiscence sing

Once Paumanok,²⁹
 When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was growing,
 Up this seashore in some briers,
 Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
 And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
 And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,
 And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent, with bright eyes,
 And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing them, 30
 Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating

Shine! shine! shine!
Pour down your warmth, great sun!
While we bask, we two together.

Two together!
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together 40

Till of a sudden,
 May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,
 One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,
 Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,
 Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,
 And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,
 Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
 Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
 I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird, 50
 The solitary guest from Alabama.

Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;
I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,
 All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,
 Down almost amid the slapping waves,
 Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.
 He call'd on his mate,
 He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know. 60

²⁹ Indian name for Long Island.

Yes my brother I know,
 The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,
 For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,
 Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the shadows,
 Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and sights after their sorts,
 The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
 I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
 Listen'd long and long

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,
 Following you my brother

70

Soothe! soothe! soothe!
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,
And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one close,
But my love soothes not me, not me

Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love

O madly the sea pushes upon the land,
With love, with love

O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the breakers?
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?

80

Loud! loud! loud!
Loud I call to you, my love!
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,
Surely you must know who is here, is here,
You must know who I am, my love

Low-hanging moon!
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!
O moon do not keep her from me any longer

Land! land! O land!
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate back again if you
only would,
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look

90

O rising stars!
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some of you

O throat! O trembling throat!
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!
Pierce the woods, the earth,
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want

Shake out carols!
Solitary here, the night's carols!
Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!

100

Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!
O under that moon where she droops almost down into the sea!
O reckless despairing carols

But soft! sink low!
Soft! let me just murmur,
And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,
So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,
But not altogether still, for then she might not come immediately to me. 110

Hither my love!
Here I am! here!
With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you,
This gentle call is for you my love, for you

Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,
That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,
Those are the shadows of leaves

O darkness! O in vain!
O I am very sick and sorrowful. 120

O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the sea!
O troubled reflection in the sea!
O throat! O throbbing heart!
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.

O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!
In the air, in the woods, over fields,
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
But my mate no more, no more with me!
We two together no more

The aria sinking, 130
All else continuing, the stars shining,
The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,
With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,
On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,
The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the face of the sea almost touching,
The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the atmosphere dallying,
The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultuously bursting,
The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,
The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering, 140
The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd secret hissing,
To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul,)
 Is it indeed toward you mate you sing? or is it really to me?
 For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you,
 Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,
 And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder and more sorrowful
 than yours,
 A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die

O you singer solitary singing by yourself, projecting me, 150
 O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating you,
 Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,
 Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,
 Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before what there in the night,
 By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon, 4
 The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,
 The unknown want, the destiny of me

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,)
 O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then, (for I will conquer it,) 160
 The word final, superior to all,
 Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen,
 Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea waves?
 Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Whereto answering, the sea,
 Delaying not, hurrying not,
 Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before daybreak,
 Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,
 And again death, death, death, death,
 Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd child's heart, 170
 But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,
 Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly all over,
 Death, death, death, death, death

Which I do not forget,
 But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,
 That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray beach,
 With the thousand responsive songs at random,
 My own songs awaked from that hour,
 And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
 The word of the sweetest song and all songs, 180
 That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
 (Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments, bending
 aside,)
 The sea whisper'd me

CHILDREN OF ADAM

FROM

*Children of Adam*³⁰

To the Garden the World

To the garden the world anew ascending,
Potent mates, daughters, sons, preluding,
The love, the life of their bodies, meaning and being,
Curious here behold my resurrection after slumber,
The revolving cycles in their wide sweep having brought me again,
Amorous, mature, all beautiful to me, all wondrous,
My limbs and the quivering fire that ever plays through them, for reasons, most
wondrous,
Existing I peer and penetrate still,
Content with the present, content with the past,
By my side or back of me Eve following, 10
Or in front, and I following her just the same.
1860 1867

Native Moments

Native moments—when you come upon me—ah you are here now,
Give me now libidinous joys only,
Give me the drench of my passions, give me life coarse and rank,
To-day I go consort with Nature's darlings, to-night too,
I am for those who believe in loose delights, I share the midnight orgies of young men,
I dance with the dancers and drink with the drinkers,
The echoes ring with our indecent calls, I pick out some low person for my dearest
friend,
He shall be lawless, rude, illiterate, he shall be one condemn'd by others for deeds
done,
I will play a part no longer, why should I exile myself from my companions?
O you shunn'd persons, I at least do not shun you, 10
I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,
I will be more to you than to any of the rest.
1860 1881

As Adam Early in the Morning

As Adam early in the morning,
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep,
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as I pass,
Be not afraid of my body.
1860 1867

³⁰ The 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass* contained a section called *Enfants d'Adam*, changed to *Children of Adam* in 1867 and later editions. The theme of some of these poems had appeared in the '55 and '56 editions, and Whitman later placed in

the group poems composed after 1860, but the group is typical of the third edition in the conscious stressing of sex as a literary subject. The *Children of Adam* poems are not personal, but abstract, philosophical.

FROM

*Calamus*³¹*In Paths Untrodden*

In paths untrodden,
 In the growth by margins of pond-waters,
 Escaped from the life that exhibits itself,
 From all the standards hitherto publish'd from the pleasures, profits, conformities,
 Which too long I was offering to feed my soul,
 Clear to me now standards not yet publish'd, clear to me that my soul,
 That the soul of the man I speak for rejoices in comrades,
 Here by myself away from the clank of the world,
 Tallying and talk'd to here by tongues aromatic,
 No longer abash'd, (for in this secluded spot I can respond as I would not dare
 elsewhere,) 10
 Strong upon me the life that does not exhibit itself, yet contains all the rest,
 Resolv'd to sing no songs to day but those of manly attachment,
 Projecting them along that substantial life,
 Bequeathing hence types of athletic love,
 Afternoon this delicious Ninth-month in my forty first year,
 I proceed for all who are or have been young men,
 To tell the secret of my nights and days,
 To celebrate the need of comrades
 1860 1867

Scented Herbage of My Breast

Scented herbage of my breast,
 Leaves from you I glean I write, to be perused best afterwards,
 Tomb-leaves, body leaves growing up above me above death,
 Perennial roots, tall leaves, O the winter shall not freeze you delicate leaves,
 Every year shall you bloom again, out from where you retired you shall emerge again,
 O I do not know whether many passing by will discover you or inhale your faint
 odor, but I believe a few will,
 O slender leaves! O blossoms of my blood! I permit you to tell in your own way
 of the heart that is under you,
 O I do not know what you mean there underneath yourselves, you are not happiness,
 You are often more bitter than I can bear, you burn and sting me,
 Yet you are beautiful to me you faint-tinged roots, you make me think of death, 10
 Death is beautiful from you, (what indeed is finally beautiful except death and love?)

³¹ The 1860 *Leaves of Grass* included a second group treating sex themes—the *Calamus* poems. Many of these seem to be personal, genuine love poems, or perhaps more accurately, friendship poems. Calamus, the key symbol, is an aromatic plant (generally called sweet flag) which grows in marshy land. The mood of these poems is shy, secretive, utterly unlike the boastful erotic display in *Children of Adam*. Some of them are downright morbid (a contradiction of the joyous rôle which

the poet had assumed in 1855 and '56), as if he had experienced great disappointment, or as if there were a tragic flaw in his character—“Tomb leaves” growing above death. Death seems to be the key-word of the 1860 edition—note “Out of the Cradle—and As I Ebb’d with the Ocean of Life.” But whatever the emotions out of which the Calamus’ imagery grew, Whitman began as early as 1860 (cf. “For You O Democracy”) to sublimate them in a social program of universal love of comrades.

O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my chant of lovers, I think it must be
 for death,
 For how calm, how solemn it grows to ascend to the atmosphere of lovers,
 Death or life I am then indifferent, my soul declines to prefer,
 (I am not sure but the high soul of lovers welcomes death most.)
 Indeed O death, I think now these leaves mean precisely the same as you mean,
 Grow up taller sweet leaves that I may see! grow up out of my breast!
 Spring away from the conceal'd heart there!
 Do not fold yourself so in your pink-tinged roots timid leaves!
 Do not remain down there so ashamed, herbage of my breast! 20
 Come I am determin'd to unbare this broad breast of mine, I have long enough
 stifled and choked,
 Emblematic and capricious blades I leave you, now you serve me not,
 I will say what I have to say by itself,
 I will sound myself and comrades only, I will never again utter a call only their call,
 I will raise with it immortal reverberations through the States,
 I will give an example to lovers to take permanent shape and will through the States,
 Through me shall the words be said to make death exhilarating
 Give me your tone therefore O death, that I may accord with it,
 Give me yourself, for I see that you belong to me now above all, and are folded
 inseparably together, you love and death are,
 Nor will I allow you to balk me any more with what I was calling life, 30
 For now it is convey'd to me that you are the purports essential,
 That you hide in these shifting forms of life, for reasons, and that they are mainly
 for you,
 That you beyond them come forth to remain, the real reality,
 That behind the mask of materials you patiently wait, no matter how long,
 That you will one day perhaps take control of all,
 That you will perhaps dissipate this entire show of appearance,
 That may-be you are what it is all for, but it does not last so very long,
 But you will last very long.
 1860 1881

For You O Democracy

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,
 I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,
 I will make divine magnetic lands,
 With the love of comrades,
 With the life-long love of comrades.
 I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America, and along
 the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies,
 I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks,
 By the love of comrades,
 By the manly love of comrades,
 For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma femme! 32
 For you, for you I am trilling these songs.
 1860 1881

³² My wife, or my beloved.

The Base of All Metaphysics

And now gentlemen,
 A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,
 As base and finale too for all metaphysics

(So to the students the old professor,
 At the close of his crowded course)

Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and Germanic systems,
 Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and Schelling and Hegel,³³
 Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,
 And greater than Socrates sought and stated, Christ divine having studied long,
 I see reminiscent to day those Greek and Germanic systems, 10
 See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets see,
 Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath Christ the divine I see,
 The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend to friend,
 Of the well married husband and wife, of children and parents,
 Of city for city and land for land
 1871 1871

I Dream'd in a Dream

I dream'd in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the whole of the rest
 of the earth,
 I dream'd that was the new city of Friends,
 Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love, it led the rest,
 It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city,
 And in all their looks and words
 1860 1867

Sometimes with One I Love

Sometimes with one I love I fill myself with rage for fear I effuse unreturn'd love,
 But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the pay is certain one way or another,
 (I loved a certain person ardently and my love was not return'd,
 Yet out of that I have written these songs)
 1860 1867

Full of Life Now

Full of life now, compact, visible,
 I, forty years old the eighty-third year of the States,
 To one a century hence or any number of centuries hence,
 To you yet unborn these, seeking you
 When you read these I that was visible am become invisible,
 Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems, seeking me,
 Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you and become your comrade,
 Be it as if I were with you (Be not too certain but I am now with you)
 1860 1871

³³ Whitman was especially attracted by the doctrines (which he got second hand) of the German romantic philosophers Fichte Schelling, and Hegel, though his own point of view was formed before he

discovered the "Germanic systems. However, Emerson and Carlyle, his two main literary sources, were greatly influenced by the German philosophers

AS I EBB'D WITH THE OCEAN OF LIFE

I Sit and Look Out ³¹

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon all oppression and
shame,
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish with themselves, remorseful
after deeds done,
I see in low life the mother misused by her children, dying, neglected, gaunt,
desperate,
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the treacherous seducer of young women,
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love attempted to be hid, I see these
sights on the earth,
I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see martyrs and prisoners,
I observe a famine at sea, I observe the sailors casting lots who shall be kill'd to
preserve the lives of the rest,
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant persons upon laborers, the
poor, and upon negroes, and the like,
All these—all the meanness and agony without end I sitting look out upon.
See, hear, and am silent
1860

10

1860

As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life ³⁵

1

As I ebb'd with the ocean of life,
As I wended the shores I know,
As I walk'd where the ripples continually wash you Paumanok,
Where they rustle up hoarse and sibilant,
Where the fierce old mother endlessly cries for her castaways,
I musing late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,
Held by this electric self out of the pride of which I utter poems,
Was seiz'd by the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot.
The rim, the sediment that stands for all the water and all the land of the globe.
Fascinated, my eyes reverting from the south, dropt, to follow those slender
windrows,
Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten,
Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce, left by the tide,
Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other side of me,
Paumanok there and then as I thought the old thought of likenesses,
These you presented to me you fish-shaped island,
As I wended the shores I know,
As I walk'd with that electric self seeking types

10

2

As I wend to the shores I know not,
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wreck'd,

³⁴ This poem is unusually pessimistic for Whitman. It first appeared as No. 17 in the group called "Leaves of Grass" in the 1860 *Leaves of Grass*; now in "By the Roadside"

³⁵ A "Sea-Drift" poem in *Leaves of Grass*. The poet seems in this poem to be on the verge of renouncing entirely his literary ambitions

As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me, 20
 As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and closer,
 I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd up drift,
 A few sands and dead leaves to gather,
 Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift

O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,
 Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,
 Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon me I have not once had
 the least idea who or what I am,
 But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands yet untouch'd, untold,
 altogether unreach'd,
 Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs and bows,
 With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I have written, 30
 Poising in silence to these songs, and then to the sand beneath

I perceive I have not really understood any thing, not a single object, and that no
 man ever can,
 Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of me to dart upon me and sting me,
 Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all

3

You oceans both, I close with you,
 We murmur alike reproachfully rolling sands and drift, knowing not why,
 These little shreds indeed standing for you and me and all

You friable shore with trails of debris,
 You fish shaped island, I take what is underfoot,
 What is yours is mine my father 40

I too Paumanok,
 I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float, and been wash'd on your shores,
 I too am but a trail of drift and debris,
 I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped island

I throw myself upon your breast my father,
 I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,
 I hold you so firm till you answer me something

Kiss me my father,
 Touch me with your lips as I touch those I love,
 Breathe to me while I hold you close the secret of the murmuring I envy 50

4

Ebb, ocean of life, (the flow will return,)
 Cease not your moaning you fierce old mother,
 Endlessly cry for your castaways, but fear not, deny not me,
 Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet as I touch you or gather from you

I mean tenderly by you and all,
 I gather for myself and for this phantom looking down where we lead, and following
 me and mine

PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!

Me and mine, loose windrows, little corpses,
 Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,
 (See, from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last,
 See, the prismatic colors glistening and rolling,) 60
 Tufts of straw, sands, fragments,
 Buoy'd hither from many moods, one contradicting another,
 From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell,
 Musing, pondering, a breath, a briny tear, a dab of liquid or soil,
 Up just as much out of fathomless workings fermented and thrown,
 A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves floating, drifted at random,
 Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature,
 Just as much whence we come that blare of the cloud-trumpets,
 We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence, spread out before you,
 You up there walking or sitting, 70
 Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet.
 1860 1881

Pioneers! O Pioneers! ³⁶

Come my tan-faced children,
 Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
 Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

For we cannot tarry here,
 We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,
 We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you youths, Western youths,
 So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship, 10
 Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with the foremost,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

Have the elder races halted?
 Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there beyond the seas?
 We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind,
 We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,
 Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,
 Pioneers! O pioneers! 20

³⁶ Originally included in *Drum Taps* (1865), but in 1881 placed in the "Birds of Passage" section of *Leaves of Grass*. This poem is very unusual in style, being almost conventional in its trochaic meter, stanza form, and refrain. The poet expands

the significance of "pioneer": initially it refers to those who were opening the American frontier, but it develops into a symbol of world and even of cosmic import—mankind and the whole universe are always progressing to something better.

We detachments steady throwing,
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown ways,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We primeval forests felling,
We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep the mines within,
We the surface broad surveying, we the virgin soil upheaving,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Colorado men are we,
From the peaks gigantic, from the great sierras and the high plateaus, 30
From the mine and from the gully, from the hunting trail we come,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the continental blood intervein'd,
All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern, all the Northern,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O resistless restless race!
O beloved race in all! O my breast aches with tender love for all!
O I mourn and yet exult, I am rapt with love for all,
Pioneers! O pioneers! 40

Raise the mighty mother mistress,
Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry mistress, (bend your heads all,)
Raise the fang'd and warlike mistress, stern, impassive, weapon'd mistress
Pioneers! O pioneers!

See my children, resolute children,
By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield or falter,
Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there behind us urging,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

On and on the compact ranks,
With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead quickly fill'd, 50
Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never stopping,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O to die advancing on!
Are there some of us to droop and die? has the hour come?
Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the gap is fill'd,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the pulses of the world,
Falling in they beat for us, with the Western movement beat,
Holding single or together, steady moving to the front, all for us,
Pioneers! O pioneers! 60

Life's involv'd and varied pageants,
All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,

PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!

All the seamen and the landmen, all the masters with their slaves,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the hapless silent lovers,
All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and the wicked,
All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the dying,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

I too with my soul and body,
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way,
Through these shores amid the shadows, with the apparitions pressing,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

70

Lo, the darting bowling orb!
Lo, the brother orbs around, all the clustering suns and planets,
All the dazzling days, all the mystic nights with dreams,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

These are of us, they are with us,
All for primal needed work, while the followers there in embryo wait behind,
We to-day's procession heading, we the route for travel clearing,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

80

O you daughters of the West!
O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you wives!
Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Minstrels latent on the prairies!
(Shrouded bards of other lands, you may rest, you have done your work,)
Soon I hear you coming warbling, soon you rise and tramp amid us,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Not for delectations sweet,
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious,
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

90

Do the feasters gluttonous feast?
Dó the corpulent sleepers sleep? have they lock'd and bolted doors?
Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Has the night descended?
Was the road of late so toilsome? did we stop discouraged nodding on our way?
Yet a passing hour I yield you in your tracks to pause oblivious,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

100

Till with sound of trumpet,
Far, far off the daybreak call—hark! how loud and clear I hear it wind,
Swift! to the head of the army!—swift! spring to your places,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Chanting the Square Deific³⁷

1

Chanting the square deific, out of the One advancing, out of the sides,
 Out of the old and new, out of the square entirely divine,
 Solid, four-sided, (all the sides needed,) from this side Jehovah am I,
 Old Brahm³⁸ I, and I Saturnius³⁹ am,
 Not Time affects me—I am Time, old, modern as any,
 Unpersuadable, relentless, executing righteous judgments,
 As the Earth, the Father, the brown old Kronos,⁴⁰ with laws,
 Aged beyond computation, yet ever new, ever with those mighty laws rolling,
 Relentless I forgive no man—whoever sins dies—I will have that man's life,
 Therefore let none expect mercy—have the seasons, gravitation, the appointed
 days, mercy? no more have I, 10
 But as the seasons and gravitation, and as all the appointed days that forgive not,
 I dispense from this side judgments inexorable without the least remorse

2

Consolator most mild, the promis'd one advancing,
 With gentle hand extended, the mightier God am I,
 Foretold by prophets and poets in their most rapt prophecies and poems,
 From this side, lo! the Lord Christ gazes—lo! Hermes⁴¹ I—lo! mine is Hercules' ⁴²
 face,
 All sorrow, labor, suffering, I, tallying it, absorb in myself,
 Many times have I been rejected, taunted, put in prison, and crucified, and many
 times shall be again,
 All the world have I given up for my dear brothers' and sisters' sake, for the soul's
 sake,
 Wending my way through the homes of men, rich or poor, with the kiss of affection 20
 For I am affection, I am the cheer-bringing God, with hope and all enclosing charity,
 With indulgent words as to children, with fresh and sane words, mine only,
 Young and strong I pass knowing well I am destin'd myself to an early death,
 But my charity has no death—my wisdom dies not, neither early nor late,
 And my sweet love bequeath'd here and elsewhere never dies

³⁷ The ideas expressed in this poem had been crystalizing in Whitman's mind for at least ten years—see footnote 12. He announced his desire for an eclectic religion in *Song of Myself* but perhaps making Satan, or rebelliousness, one side of the four-square deity or god-head may have been influenced by his own experiences in the Civil War and his conciliating sympathy in 1865-66 for the rebels. The poem has been summarized briefly in this manner: "Out of the one" (the Absolute or the square entirely divine) advance the various religions of the past, the poet eagerly and vicariously identifying himself with each in turn, including the pagan, the Christian, the anti-Christian (Satan—evil, revolt), but culminating with Santa Spirita, breather, life. This life spirit, which includes all beings and is the life of the real identities, is nothing but

a kind of pantheistic Over-Soul. This soul is personified, as in many other poems by the "I" of the poet, which completes not the Trinity but the "Square" (*Walt Whitman in Handbook*, p. 271).

³⁸ Brahma, in Hindu religion the supreme soul or essence of the universe.

³⁹ Saturn (or Saturnius) was a Roman god of seed sowing, later identified with the Greek Cronus (or Kronos).

⁴⁰ Same as Roman Saturn (see note 39 above). He became confused with Chronos (Time), as Whitman seems to be aware he is in his shift from Saturn (l. 4) to Kronos—note the play on "time" in l. 5.

⁴¹ An Olympian god, messenger of the gods, giver of increase to herds, etc.

⁴² Son of Jupiter, celebrated for his strength.

DRUM-TAPS

3

Aloof, dissatisfied, plotting revolt,
 Comrade of criminals, brother of slaves,
 Crafty, despised, a drudge, ignorant,
 With sudra face and worn brow, black, but in the depths of my heart, proud as any,
 Lifted now and always against whoever scorning assumes to rule me, 30
 Morose, full of guile, full of reminiscences, brooding, with many wiles,
 (Though it was thought I was baffled and dispel'd, and my wiles done, but that
 will never be,)
 Defiant, I, Satan,⁴³ still live, still utter words, in new lands duly appearing, (and
 old ones also,)
 Permanent here from my side, warlike, equal with any, real as any,
 Nor time nor change shall ever change me or my words.

4

Santa Spirit,⁴⁴ breather, life,
 Beyond the light, lighter than light,
 Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above hell,
 Beyond Paradise, perfumed solely with mine own perfume,
 Including all life on earth, touching, including God, including Saviour and Satan, 40
 Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me what were all? what were God?)
 Essence of forms, life of the real identities, permanent, positive, (namely the unseen,)
 Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man, I, the general soul,
 Here the square finishing, the solid, I the most solid,
 Breathe my breath also through these songs.
 1865-66 1881

FROM

*Drum-Taps*⁴⁵

Beat! Beat! Drums!

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
 Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless force,
 Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
 Into the school where the scholar is studying;
 Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride,
 Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or gathering his grain,
 So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.

⁴³ The Satan of the Old Testament, of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and perhaps still alive in the rebellion against the Union

⁴⁴ Holy Spirit, the epitome of deity—"pervading all . . . Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man . . ." This pantheistic concept of deity embraces and transcends all others

⁴⁵ *Drum-Taps*, a collection of Civil War poems, was published in a seventy-two page pamphlet in 1865, to which Whitman added in a few months a "Sequel" containing "When Lilacs Last in the

Dooryard Bloom'd." Both of these collections were added to *Leaves of Grass* in 1867 as "annexes" and in 1871 were incorporated into the main body of *Leaves of Grass*, with some changes in subsequent editions. The tone of these poems is not uniform, for they reflect the changing emotions of the poet from his first wild patriotism to his concern for his wounded brother and, after associating with the wounded men in the hospitals, growing compassion for the fighting men of both sides.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
 Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets,
 Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no sleepers must sleep in
 those beds, 10
 No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—would they continue?
 Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?
 Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?
 Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow

 Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
 Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,
 Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,
 Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,
 Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,
 Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses, 20
 So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow
 1867 1867

Come Up from the Fields Father ⁴⁶

Come up from the fields father, here's a letter from our Pcte,
 And come to the front door mother, here's a letter from thy dear son

 Lo, 'tis autumn,
 Lo where the trees, deeper green, yellower and redder,
 Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves fluttering in the moderate wind,
 Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and grapes on the trellis'd vines,
 (Smell you the smell of the grapes on the vines?
 Smell you the buckwheat where the bees were lately buzzing?)

 Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent after the rain, and with wondrous
 clouds,
 Below too, all calm, all vital and beautiful, and the farm prospers well 10

 Down in the fields all prospers well,
 But now from the fields come father, come at the daughter's call,
 And come to the entry mother, to the front door come right away

 Fast as she can she hurries, something ominous, her steps trembling,
 She does not tarry to smooth her hair nor adjust her cap

 Open the envelope quickly,
 O this is not our son's writing, yet his name is sign'd,
 O a strange hand writes for our dear son, O stricken mother's soul!
 All swims before her eyes, flashes with black, she catches the main words only,
 Sentences broken, *gunshot wound in the breast, cavalry skirmish, taken to hospital,* 20
At present low, but will soon be better

 Ah now the single figure to me,
 Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio with all its cities and farms,

⁴⁶ This poem can not be strictly autobiographical, but it no doubt reflects some of the poet's own emotions when he read his brother George's name

in the list of the wounded December 14, 1862. At the time he wrote the poem Whitman knew that many families had received such a message

THE WOUND-DRESSER

Sickly white in the face and dull in the head, very faint,
By the jamb of a door leans

*Grieve not so, dear mother, (the just-grown daughter speaks through her sobs,
The little sisters huddle around speechless and dismay'd,)
See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better.*

Alas poor boy, he will never be better, (nor may-be needs to be better, that brave
and simple soul,)

While they stand at home at the door he is dead already,
The only son is dead.

30

But the mother needs to be better,
She with thin form presently drest in black,
By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully sleeping, often waking,
In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep longing,
O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from life escape and withdraw,
To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.

1865

1867

The Wound-Dresser

1

An old man bending I come among new faces,
Years looking backward resuming in answer to children,
Come tell us old man, as from young men and maidens that love me,
(Arous'd and angry, I'd thought to beat the alarum, and urge relentless war,
But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd and I resign'd myself,
To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently watch the dead,)
Years hence of these scenes, of these furious passions, these chances,
Of unsurpass'd heroes, (was one side so brave? the other was equally brave;)
Now be witness again, paint the mightiest armies of earth,
Of those armies so rapid so wondrous what saw you to tell us?
What stays with you latest and deepest? of curious panics,
Of hard-fought engagements or sieges tremendous what deepest remains?

10

2

O maidens and young men I love and that love me,
What you ask of my days those the strangest and sudden your talking recalls,
Soldier alert I arrive after a long march cover'd with sweat and dust,
In the nick of time I come, plunge in the fight, loudly shout in the rush of successful
charge,
Enter the captur'd works—yet lo, like a swift-running river they fade,
Pass and are gone they fade—I dwell not on soldiers' perils or soldiers' joys,
(Both I remember well—many of the hardships, few the joys, yet I was content.)

But in silence, in dreams' projections,
While the world of gain and appearance and mirth goes on,
So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the imprints off the sand,
With hinged knees returning I enter the doors, (while for you up there,
Whoever you are, follow without noise and be of strong heart.)

20

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
 Straight and swift to my wounded I go,
 Where they lie on the ground after the battle brought in,
 Where there priceless blood reddens the grass the ground,
 Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under the roof'd hospital,
 To the long rows of cots up and down each side I return, 30
 To each and all one after another I draw near, not one do I miss,
 An attendant follows holding a tray, he carries a refuse pail,
 Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood, emptied, and fill'd again

I onward go, I stop,
 With hinged knees and steady hand to dress wounds,
 I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet unavoidable,
 One turns to me his appealing eyes—poor boy! I never knew you,
 Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die for you, if that would save you

3

On, on I go, (open doors of time! open hospital doors!)
 The crush'd head I dress, (poor crazed hand tear not the bandage away) 40
 The neck of the cavalry-man with the bullet through and through I examine,
 Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed already the eye, yet life struggles hard,
 (Come sweet death! be persuaded O beautiful death!
 In mercy come quickly)

From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand,
 I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off the matter and blood,
 Back on his pillow the soldier bends with curv'd neck and side falling head,
 His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he dares not look on the bloody stump,
 And has not yet look'd on it

I dress a wound in the side, deep, deep,
 But a day or two more, for see the frame all wasted and sinking,
 And the yellow blue countenance see

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with the bullet-wound,
 Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so sickening, so offensive,
 While the attendant stands behind aside me holding the tray and pail

I am faithful, I do not give out,
 The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,
 These and more I dress with impassive hand, (yet deep in my breast a fire, a
 burning flame)

4

Thus in silence in dreams' projections,
 Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the hospitals, 60
 The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,
 I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so young,
 Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet and sad,
 (Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have cross'd and rested,
 Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips)

DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS

Dirge for Two Veterans

The last sunbeam
Lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath,
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking,
Down a new-made double grave

Lo, the moon ascending,
Up from the east the silvery round moon,
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,
Immense and silent moon

I see a sad procession,
And I hear the sound of coming full-key'd bugles, 10
All the channels of the city streets they're flooding,
As with voices and with tears

I hear the great drums pounding,
And the small drums steady whirring,
And every blow of the great convulsive drums,
Strikes me through and through

For the son is brought with the father,
(In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,
Two veterans son and father dropt together,
And the double grave awaits them) 20

Now nearer blow the bugles,
And the drums strike more convulsive,
And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumin'd,
('Tis some mother's large transparent face,
In heaven brighter growing)

O strong dead-march you please me!
O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!
What I have I also give you

The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and the drums give you music,
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love

To the Leaven'd Soil They Trod

To the leaven'd soil they trod calling I sing for the last,
 (Forth from my tent emerging for good, loosing, untying the tent ropes,)
 In the freshness the forenoon air, in the far stretching circuits and vistas again to
 peace restored,
 To the fiery fields emanative and the endless vistas beyond, to the South and the
 North,
 To the leaven'd soil of the general Western world to attest my songs,
 To the Alleghamian hills and the tireless Mississippi,
 To the rocks I calling sing, and all the trees in the woods,
 To the plains of the poems of heroes, to the prairies spreading wide,
 To the far-off sea and the unseen winds, and the sane impalpable air,
 And responding they answer all, (but not in words,) 10
 The average earth, the witness of war and peace, acknowledges mutely,
 The prairie draws me close, as the father to bosom broad the son,
 The Northern ice and rain that began me nourish me to the end,
 But the hot sun of the South is to fully ripen my songs
 1865-66 1881

O Captain! My Captain! ⁴⁷

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
 The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
 The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
 While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring,
 But O heart! heart! heart!
 O the bleeding drops of red,
 Where on the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead
 O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells,
 Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills, 10
 For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a crowding,
 For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning,
 Here Captain! dear father!
 This arm beneath your head!
 It is some dream that on the deck,
 You've fallen cold and dead
 My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
 My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
 The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
 From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won 20
 Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
 But I with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead

1865

1871

⁴⁷ This elegy, in its nearly conventional rhyme and meter has been far more popular than Whitman's great lilac poem. It is uncharacteristic of

Whitman, and in his old age he regretted having written it. It appeared first in "Sequel to Drum Taps."

*When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*⁴⁸

1

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring
Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love

2

O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd—O the black murk that hides the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless soul of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul

3

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-wash'd palings,
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the dooryard,
With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
A sprig with its flower I break

4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.
Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
Sings by himself a song
Song of the bleeding throat,
Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know,
If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely die)

5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the violets peep'd from the ground,
spotting the gray debris,
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing the endless grass,
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its shroud in the dark-brown
fields uprisen,

⁴⁸ The death of Lincoln stirred Whitman more deeply than any other experience treated in his poems. This poem was first published in the "Sequel" to *Drum-Taps* (1865-66) and later (1881) incorporated into *Leaves of Grass* in a section called "Memories of President Lincoln." In structure the

lilac poem resembles the other great elegy, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," especially in the bird motif, but it is superior in its consummate mastery of imagery and rhythm. It is unquestionably Walt Whitman's masterpiece and one of the great elegies in the English language.

Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards, 30
 Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,
 Night and day journeys a coffin ⁴⁹

6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
 Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land,
 With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities draped in black,
 With the show of the States themselves as of crape veil'd women standing,
 With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of the night,
 With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces and the unbarred heads,
 With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the sombre faces,
 With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising strong and solemn, 40
 With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around the coffin,
 The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—where amid these you journey,
 With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,
 Here, coffin that slowly passes,
 I give you my sprig of lilac

7

(Nor for you, for one alone,
 Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,
 For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for you O sane and sacred death
 All over bouquets of roses,
 O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies, 50
 But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,
 Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,
 With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,
 For you and the coffins all of you O death)

8

O western orb sailing the heaven,
 Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I walk'd,
 As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,
 As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night after night,
 As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side, (while the other stars all
 look'd on,)
 As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something I know not what kept
 me from sleep,) 60
 As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how full you were of woe,
 As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool transparent night,
 As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the netherward black of the night,
 As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you sad orb,
 Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

⁴⁹ This is an accurate description of the journey Springfield Illinois, by way of Philadelphia and of Lincoln's funeral train from Washington to New York

9

Sing on there in the swamp,
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your call,
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd me,
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me

70

10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that has gone?
And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western sea, till there on the
prairies meeting,
These and with these and the breath of my chant,
I'll perfume the grave of him I love

11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,
To adorn the burial-house of him I love?

80

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke lucid and bright,
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent, sinking sun, burning,
expanding the air,
With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green leaves of the trees
prolific,
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a wind-dapple here
and there,
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the sky, and shadows,
And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of chimneys,
And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the workmen homeward returning.

12

Lo, body and soul—this land,
My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and hurrying tides, and the ships, 90
The varied and ample land, the South and the North in the light, Ohio's shores and
flashing Missouri,
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass and corn

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,
The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,
The gentle soft-born measureless light,
The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

13

Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,
 Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from the bushes, 100
 Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines

Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,
 Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe

O liquid and free and tender!
 O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer!
 You only I hear—yet the star holds me, (but will soon depart,)
 Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me

14

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,
 In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring, and the farmers
 preparing their crops,
 In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes and forests, 110
 In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds and the storms,)
 Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and the voices of children
 and women,

The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how they sail'd,
 And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all busy with labor,
 And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each with its meals and
 minutia of daily usages,
 And the streets how their throbbings throb'd, and the cities pent—lo, then and
 there,

Falling upon them all and among them all enveloping me with the rest,
 Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,
 And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me, 120
 And the thought of death close walking the other side of me,
 And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the hands of companions,
 I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,
 Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness,
 To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,
 The gray brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,
 And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love

From deep secluded recesses,
 From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still, 130
 Came the carol of the bird

And the charm of the carol rapt me,
 As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,
 And the voice of my spirit talk'd the song of the bird

*Come lovely and soothing death,
 Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,*

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOM'D

*In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious, 140
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death*

*Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly*

*Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death. 150*

*From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and feastings for thee,
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know,
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil'd death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee*

*Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the prairies wide, 160
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death*

15

*To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.*

*Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,
And I with my comrades there in the night.*

*While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions. 170*

*And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with missiles I saw them,
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and bloody,
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all in silence,)
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.*

*I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,*

I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,
 But I saw they were not as was thought, 180
 They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
 The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,
 And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,
 And the armies that remain'd suffer'd

16

Passing the visions, passing the night,
 Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,
 Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song of my soul,
 Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever altering song,
 As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling, flooding the night,
 Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet again bursting with joy, 190
 Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,
 As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,
 Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
 I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with spring

I cease from my song for thee,
 From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west, communing with thee,
 O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night,
 The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,
 And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul, 200
 With the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance full of woe,
 With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of the bird,
 Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to keep, for the dead I
 loved so well,

For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and this for his dear sake,
 Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
 There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim
 1865-66 1881

Passage to India ⁵⁰

1

Singing my days,
 Singing the great achievements of the present,
 Singing the strong light works of engineers,
 Our modern wonders, (the antique ponderous Seven outvied,)

⁵⁰ This poem was first published in pamphlet form in 1871, and then combined the same year with *Leaves of Grass* as an 'annex'. It became a separate section in 1881. The immediate stimulus for the poem was three engineering feats of recent years: in 1866 the transatlantic cable was completed, and a celebration was held in New York, the Suez Canal was completed in 1869, and also in 1869 the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroad tracks were joined, thus completely spanning the North American continent by rail. Whitman had long been interested in the history of mankind, and he

took these events to symbolize the re-establishment of a social and intellectual solidarity of all humanity—the "One World" concept which Wendell Willkie popularized many years later. This poem also marks a new epoch in Whitman's spiritual development. No longer does the poet search for the meaning of life and death in the sibilant waves that wash the shore of Paumanok. Fearlessly he and his soul set out on a voyage, singing their songs of God, and instead of questioning (see *As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life*), now the poet affirms and prays that he may mount to God.

PASSAGE TO INDIA

In the Old World the east the Suez canal,
The New by its mighty railroad spann'd,
The seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires,
Yet first to sound, and ever sound, the cry with thee O soul,
The Past! the Past! the Past!

The Past—the dark unfathom'd retrospect!
The teeming gulf—the sleepers and the shadows!
The past—the infinite greatness of the past!
For what is the present after all but a growth out of the past?
(As a projectile form'd, impell'd, passing a certain line, still keeps on,
So the present, utterly form'd, impell'd by the past.)

10

2

Passage O soul to India!
Eclaircise ⁵¹ the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables

Not you alone proud truths of the world,
Nor you alone ye facts of modern science,
But myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables,
The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,
The deep diving bibles and legends,
The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions;
O you temples fairer than lilies pour'd over by the rising sun!
O you fables spurning the known, eluding the hold of the known, mounting to
heaven!

20

You lofty and dazzling towers, pinnacled, red as roses, burnish'd with gold!
Towers of fables immortal fashion'd from mortal dreams!
You too I welcome and fully the same as the rest!
You too with joy I sing

Passage to India!

30

Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first?
The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,
The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,
The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
The lands to be welded together

A worship new I sing,
You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours,
You engineers, you architects, machinists, yours,
You, not for trade or transportation only,
But in God's name, and for thy sake O soul.

40

3

Passage to India!
Lo soul for thee of tableaux twain,
I see in one the Suez canal initiated, open'd,

⁵¹ Coined from French *éclairer* to make clear.

I see the procession of steamships, the Empress Eugenie's ⁵² leading the van,
 I mark from on deck the strange landscape, the pure sky, the level sand in the
 distance,
 I pass swiftly the picturesque groups, the workmen gather'd,
 The gigantic dredging machines

In one again, different, (yet thine, all thine, O soul, the same,)
 I see over my own continent the Pacific railroad surmounting every barrier,
 I see continual trains of cars winding along the Platte ⁵³ carrying freight and
 passengers, 50
 I hear the locomotives rushing and roaring, and the shrill steam whistle,
 I hear the echoes reverberate through the grandest scenery in the world,
 I cross the Laramie plains, I note the rocks in grotesque shapes, the buttes,
 I see the plentiful larkspur and wild onions, the barren, colorless, sage deserts,
 I see in glimpses afar or towering immediately above me the great mountains, I see
 the Wind river and the Wahsatch mountains,
 I see the Monument mountain and the Eagle's Nest, I pass the promontory, I
 ascend the Nevadas,
 I scan the noble Elk mountain and wind around its base,
 I see the Humboldt range, I thread the valley and cross the river,
 I see the clear waters of lake Tahoe, I see forests of majestic pines,
 Or crossing the great desert, the alkaline plains, I behold enchanting mirages of
 waters and meadows, 60
 Marking through these and after all, in duplicate slender lines,
 Bridging the three or four thousand miles of land travel,
 Tying the Eastern to the Western sea,
 The road between Europe and Asia
 (Ah Genoese ⁵⁴ thy dream! thy dream!
 Centuries after thou art laid in thy grave,
 The shore thou foundest verifies thy dream)

4

Passage to India!
 Struggles of many a captain, tales of many a sailor dead,
 Over my mood stealing and spreading they come, 70
 Like clouds and cloudlets in the unreach'd sky

Along all history, down the slopes,
 As a rivulet running, sinking now, and now again to the surface rising,
 A ceaseless thought, a varied train—lo, soul, to thee, thy sight, they rise,
 The plans, the voyages again, the expeditions,
 Again Vasco de Gama ⁵⁵ sails forth,
 Again the knowledge gain'd, the mariner's compass,
 Lands found and nations born, thou born America,

⁵² Eugenie, wife of Napoleon III, was on board the lead ship of the procession when the Suez Canal was formally opened in November, 1869

⁵³ The places mentioned in this section are on the Union Pacific Railway between Omaha and San Francisco

⁵⁴ Columbus is supposed to have been from Genoa

⁵⁵ Vasco da Gama Portuguese navigator, made the first voyage from western Europe around Africa to India (1497-98)

For purpose vast, man's long probation fill'd,
Thou rondure of the world at last accomplish'd.

80

5

O vast Rondure, swimming in space,
Cover'd all over with visible power and beauty,
Alternate light and day and the teeming spiritual darkness,
Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon and countless stars above,
Below, the manifold grass and waters, animals, mountains, trees,
With inscrutable purpose, some hidden prophetic intention,
Now first it seems my thought begins to span thee

Down from the gardens of Asia descending radiating,
Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after them,
Wandering, yearning, curious, with restless explorations,
With questionings, baffled, formless, feverish, with never-happy hearts,
With that sad incessant refrain, *Wherefore unsatisfied soul?* and *Whither O*
mocking life?

90

Ah who shall soothe these feverish children?
Who justify these restless explorations?
Who speak the secret of impassive earth?
Who bind it to us? what is this separate Nature so unnatural?
What is this earth to our affections? (unloving earth, without a throb to answer ours,
Cold earth, the place of graves.)

Yet soul be sure the first intent remains, and shall be carried out,
Perhaps even now the time has arrived

100

After the seas are all cross'd, (as they seem already cross'd,)
After the great captains and engineers have accomplish'd their work,
After the noble inventors, after the scientists, the chemist, the geologist, ethnologist,
Finally shall come the poet worthy that name,
The true son of God shall come singing his songs.

Then not your deeds only O voyagers, O scientists and inventors, shall be justified,
All these hearts as of fretted children shall be sooth'd,
All affection shall be fully responded to, the secret shall be told,
All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and hook'd and link'd together,
The whole earth, this cold, impassive, voiceless earth, shall be completely justified,
Trinitas divine shall be gloriously accomplish'd and compacted by the true son of

110

God, the poet,
(He shall indeed pass the straits and conquer the mountains,
He shall double the cape of Good Hope to some purpose,)
Nature and Man shall be disjoin'd and diffused no more,
The true son of God shall absolutely fuse them.

6

Year at whose wide-flung door I sing!
Year of the purpose accomplish'd!
Year of the marriage of continents, climates and oceans!

(No mere doge of Venice now wedding the Adriatic,)⁵⁶
 I see O year in you the vast terraqueous globe given and giving all, 120
 Europe to Asia, Africa join'd, and they to the New World,
 The lands, geographies, dancing before you, holding a festival garland,
 As brides and bridegrooms hand in hand

Passage to India!
 Cooling airs from Caucasus,⁵⁷ far, soothing cradle of man,
 The river Euphrates flowing, the past lit up again

Lo soul, the retrospect brought forward,
 The old, most populous, wealthiest of earth's lands,
 The streams of the Indus and the Ganges and their many affluents,
 (I my shores of America walking to day behold, resuming all,) 130
 The tale of Alexander on his warlike marches suddenly dying,
 On one side China and on the other side Persia and Arabia,
 To the south the great seas and the bay of Bengal,
 The flowing literatures, tremendous epics, religions, castes,
 Old occult Brahma interminably far back, the tender and junior Buddha,
 Central and southern empires and all their belongings, possessors,
 The wars of Tamerlane,⁵⁸ the reign of Aurungzebe,⁵⁹
 The trades, rulers, explorers, Moslems, Venetians, Byzantium, the Arabs, Portuguese,
 The first travelers famous yet, Marco Polo,⁶⁰ Batouta the Moor,⁶¹
 Doubts to be solv'd, the map incognita, blanks to be fill'd, 140
 The foot of man unstay'd, the hands never at rest,
 Thyself O soul that will not brook a challenge

The mediæval navigators rise before me,
 The world of 1492, with its awaken'd enterprise,
 Something swelling in humanity now like the sap of the earth in spring,
 The sunset splendor of chivalry declining

And who art thou sad shade?
 Gigantic, visionary, thyself a visionary,
 With majestic limbs and pious beaming eyes,
 Spreading around with every look of thine a golden world, 150
 Enhuing it with gorgeous hues

As the chief histrion,
 Down to the footlights walks in some great scena,
 Dominating the rest I see the Admiral himself,
 (History's type of courage, action, faith,)
 Behold him sail from Palos leading his little fleet,
 His voyage behold, his return, his great fame,
 His misfortunes, calumniators, behold him a prisoner, chain'd,
 Behold his dejection, poverty, death

⁵⁶ During the height of Venice's commercial prosperity by sea trade, the Doge annually, from a state barge, threw a gold ring into the sea as a symbol of wedding Venice to the source of her prosperity

⁵⁷ The Caucasus region dividing Europe and

Asia, was then thought to have been the cradle of mankind

⁵⁸ Mongol conqueror (1333-1375)

⁵⁹ Emperor of Hindustan (1658-1707)

⁶⁰ Venetian traveler (1254-1293) in China

⁶¹ Muhammad ibn Abd Allah (1303-77), traveler in Asia and Africa

(Curious in time I stand, noting the efforts of heroes,
Is the deferment long? bitter the slander, poverty, death?
Lies the seed unreck'd for centuries in the ground? lo, to God's due occasion,
Uprising in the night, it sprouts, blooms,
And fills the earth with use and beauty.) 160

7

Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,
Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,
The young maturity of brood and bloom,
To realms of budding bibles

O soul, repressless, I with thee and thou with me,
Thy circumnavigation of the world begin, 170
Of man, the voyage of his mind's return,
To reason's early paradise,
Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,
Again with fair creation.

8

O we can wait no longer,
We too take ship O soul,
Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,
Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy to sail,
Amid the wafting winds, (thou pressing me to thee, I thee to me, O soul,) 180
Caroling free, singing our song of God,
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration

With laugh and many a kiss,
(Let others deprecate, let others weep for sin, remorse, humiliation,)
O soul thou pleasest me, I thee

Ah more than any priest O soul we too believe in God,
But with the mystery of God we dare not dally.

O soul thou pleasest me, I thee,
Sailing these seas or on the hills, or waking in the night,
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and Death, like waters flowing, 190
Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite,
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all over,
Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee,
I and my soul to range in range of thee.

O Thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre of them,
Thou mightier centre of the true, the good, the loving,
Thou moral, spiritual fountain—affection's source—thou reservoir,
(O pensive soul of me—O thirst unsatisfied—waitest not there?
Waitest not haply for us somewhere there the Comrade perfect?) 200
Thou pulse—thou motive of the stars, suns, systems,

That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious,
 Athwart the shapeless vastnesses of space,
 How should I think, how breathe a single breath, how speak, if, out of myself,
 I could not launch, to those, superior universes?

Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
 At Nature and its wonders Time and Space and Death,
 But that I, turning, call to thee O soul, thou actual Me,
 And lo thou gently masterest the orbs,
 Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death
 And fillest swellest full the vastnesses of Space

210

Greater than stars or suns,
 Bounding O soul thou journeyest forth
 What love than thine and ours could wider amplify?
 What aspirations, wishes, outvie thine and ours O soul?
 What dreams of the ideal? what plans of purity, perfection, strength,
 What cheerful willingness for others' sake to give up all?
 For others' sake to suffer all?

Reckoning ahead O soul, when thou, the time achiev'd,
 The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage done,
 Surrounded, copest, frontest God, yieldest, the aim attain'd,
 As fill'd with friendship, love complete, the Elder Brother found,
 The Younger melts in fondness in his arms

220

9

Passage to more than India!
 Are thy wings plumed indeed for such far flights?
 O soul, voyagest thou indeed on voyages like those?
 Disportest thou on waters such as those?
 Soundest below the Sanscrit⁶² and the Vedas?⁶³
 Then have thy bent unleash'd

Passage to you, your shores, ye aged fierce enigmas!
 Passage to you, to mastership of you, ye strangling problems!
 You, strew'd with the wrecks of skeletons, that, living, never reach'd you

230

Passage to more than India!
 O secret of the earth and sky!
 Of you O waters of the sea! O winding creeks and rivers!
 Of you O woods and fields! of you strong mountains of my land!
 Of you O prairies! of you gray rocks!
 O morning red! O clouds! O rain and snows!
 O day and night, passage to you!
 O sun and moon and all you stars! Sirius and Jupiter!
 Passage to you!⁶⁴

240

⁶² Literary language of India, used about 5000 B.C., in which the sacred books of the Hindus were written

⁶³ Whitman probably meant religious writings in Sanscrit (plural). The *Vedas* are actually a part of the *Veda* (collective)

⁶⁴ In the theory of cosmic evolution held by Kant

and some of the later German romantic philosophers, souls could migrate from one cosmic system to another and were subject to evolutionary processes. Whitman may have derived this idea indirectly from Kant, through Coleridge, Carlyle, and Emerson.

Passage, immediate passage! the blood burns in my veins!
 Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!
 Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail!
 Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long enough?
 Have we not grovel'd here long enough, eating and drinking like mere brutes?
 Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves with books long enough?

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,
 Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,
 For we are bound where manner has not yet dared to go, 250
 And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all

O my brave soul!
 O farther farther sail!
 O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?
 O farther, farther, farther sail!
 1868

1871

*On the Beach at Night*⁶⁵

On the beach at night,
 Stands a child with her father,
 Watching the east, the autumn sky.

Up through the darkness,
 While ravening clouds, the burial clouds, in black masses spreading,
 Lower sullen and fast athwart and down the sky,
 Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in the east,
 Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,
 And nigh at hand, only a very little above,
 Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades. 210

From the beach the child holding the hand of her father,
 Those burial clouds that lower victorious soon to devour all,
 Watching, silently weeps.

Weep not, child,
 Weep not, my darling,
 With these kisses let me remove your tears,
 The ravening clouds shall not long be victorious,
 They shall not long possess the sky, they devour the stars only in apparition,
 Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch again another night, the Pleiades shall emerge,
 They are immortal, all those stars both silvery and golden shall shine out again, 20
 The great stars and the little ones shall shine out again, they endure,
 The vast immortal suns and the long-enduring pensive moons shall again shine

Then dearest child mournest thou only for Jupiter?
 Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars?

Something there is,
 (With my lips soothing thee, adding I whisper,

⁶⁵ Reminiscent of the 1856 "On the Beach at Night Alone," the thought of which is here dramatized.

I give thee the first suggestion, the problem and indirection,) ⁶⁶
 Something there is more immortal even than the stars,
 (Many the burials, many the days and nights, passing away,)
 Something that shall endure longer even than lustrous Jupiter,
 Longer than sun or any revolving satellite,
 Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades
 1871

30

1871

Joy, Shipmate, Joy! ⁶⁷

Joy, shipmate, joy!
 (Pleas'd to my soul at death I cry,)
 Our life is closed, our life begins,
 The long, long anchorage we leave,
 The ship is clear at last, she leaps!
 She swiftly courses from the shore,
 Joy, shipmate, joy!
 1871

1871

Prayer of Columbus ⁶⁸

A batter'd, wreck'd old man,
 Thrown on this savage shore, far, far from home,
 Pent by the sea and dark rebellious brows, twelve dreary months,
 Sore, stiff with many toils, sicken'd and nigh to death,
 I take my way along the island's edge,
 Venting a heavy heart

I am too full of woe!
 Haply I may not live another day,
 I cannot rest O God, I cannot eat or drink or sleep,
 Till I put forth myself, my prayer, once more to Thee,
 Breathe, bathe myself once more in Thee, commune with Thee,
 Report myself once more to Thee

10

Thou knowest my years entire, my life,
 My long and crowded life of active work, not adoration merely,
 Thou knowest the prayers and vigils of my youth,
 Thou knowest my manhood's solemn and visionary meditations,
 Thou knowest how before I commenced I devoted all to come to Thee,
 Thou knowest I have in age ratified all those vows and strictly kept them,
 Thou knowest I have not once lost nor faith nor ecstasy in Thee,
 In shackles, prison'd, in disgrace, repining not,
 Accepting all from Thee, as duly come from Thee

20

⁶⁶ Like all mystics, Whitman believes that his real meaning cannot be expressed logically and adequately but can only be suggested—conveyed *indirectly*

⁶⁷ Published as the final poem in the *Passage to India* collection

⁶⁸ In February, 1873, Whitman suffered his first paralytic stroke, and in May his mother, for whom he had an unusually strong attachment, died. In the

midsummer of 1874 he was discharged from his position in Washington which had been filled by a substitute during his illness. Some time during this discouraging period he wrote this poem, identifying himself imaginatively with Columbus in his old age, "A batter'd, wreck'd old man," from whose prayer the poet tried to gain for himself a sustaining hope, faith, and reconciliation.

All my emprises have been fill'd with Thee,
 My speculations, plans, begun and carried on in thoughts of Thee,
 Sailing the deep or journeying the land for Thee,
 Intentions, purports, aspirations mine, leaving results to Thee

O I am sure they really came from Thee,
 The urge, the ardor, the unconquerable will,
 The potent, felt, interior command, stronger than words,
 A message from the Heavens whispering to me even in sleep,
 These sped me on

30

By me and these the work so far accomplish'd,
 By me earth's elder cloy'd and stifled lands uncloy'd, unloos'd,
 By me the hemispheres rounded and tied, the unknown to the known

The end I know not, it is all in Thee,
 Or small or great I know not—haply what broad fields, what lands,
 Haply the brutish measureless human undergrowth I know,
 Transplanted there may rise to stature, knowledge worthy Thee,
 Haply the swords I know may there indeed be turn'd to reaping-tools,
 Haply the lifeless cross I know, Europe's dead cross, may bud and blossom there

One effort more, my altar this bleak sand,
 That Thou O God my life hast lighted,
 With ray of light, steady, ineffable, vouchsafed of Thee,
 Light rare untellable, lighting the very light,
 Beyond all signs, descriptions, languages;
 For that O God, be it my latest word, here on my knees,
 Old, poor, and paralyzed, I thank Thee.

My terminus near,
 The clouds already closing in upon me,
 The voyage balk'd, the course disputed, lost,
 I yield my ships to Thee.

50

My hands, my limbs grow nerveless,
 My brain feels rack'd, bewilder'd,
 Let the old timbers part, I will not part,
 I will cling fast to Thee, O God, though the waves buffet me,
 Thee, Thee at least I know.

Is it the prophet's thought I speak, or am I raving?
 What do I know of life? what of myself?
 I know not even my own work past or present,
 Dim•ever-shifting guesses of it spread before me,
 Of newer better worlds, their mighty parturition,
 Mocking, perplexing me.

60

And these things I see suddenly, what mean they?
 As if some miracle, some hand divine unseal'd my eyes,
 Shadowy vast shapes smile through the air and sky,
 And on the distant waves sail countless ships,
 And anthems in new tongues I hear saluting me.

*To a Locomotive in Winter*⁶⁹

Thee for my recitative,
 Thee in the driving storm even as now, the snow, the winter day declining,
 Thee in thy panoply, thy measur'd dual throbbing and thy beat convulsive,
 Thy black cylindric body, golden brass and silvery steel,
 Thy ponderous side bars, parallel and connecting rods, gyrating, shuttling at thy sides,
 Thy metric'd, now swelling pant and roar, now tapering in the distance,
 Thy great protruding head light fix'd in front,
 Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with delicate purple,
 The dense and murky clouds out belching from thy smoke-stack,
 Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremulous twinkle of thy wheels, 10
 Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily following,
 Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily careering,
 Type of the modern—emblem of motion and power—pulse of the continent,
 For once come serve the Muse and merge in verse, even as here I see thee,
 With storm and buffeting gusts of wind and falling snow,
 By day thy warning ringing bell to sound its notes,
 By night thy silent signal lamps to swing

Fierce-throated beauty!
 Roll through my chant with all thy lawless music, thy swinging lamps at night,
 Thy madly-whistled laughter, echoing, rumbling like an earthquake, rousing all, 20
 Law of thyself complete, thine own track firmly holding,
 (No sweetness debonair of tearful harp or glib piano thine,)
 Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return'd,
 Launch'd o'er the prairies wide, across the lakes,
 To the free skies unpent and glad and strong
 1876 1881

*Good-bye My Fancy!*⁷⁰

Good-bye my Fancy!⁷¹
 Farewell dear mate, dear love!
 I'm going away, I know not where,
 Or to what fortune, or whether I may ever see you again,
 So Good-bye my Fancy

Now for my last—let me look back a moment,
 The slower fainter ticking of the clock is in me,
 Exit, nightfall, and soon the heart-thud stopping
 Long have we lived, joy'd, caress'd together,
 Delightful!—now separation—Good-bye my Fancy 10

Yet let me not be too hasty,
 Long indeed have we lived, slept, filter'd, become really blended into one,
 Then if we die we die together, (yes, we'll remain one,)

⁶⁹ One of the poet's attempts to celebrate in poetry the age of industrialism and machinery. Compare Emily Dickinson's poem on a locomotive.

⁷⁰ The final poem in the section of *Leaves of*

Grass called "Good-bye My Fancy" in the last edition.

⁷¹ Poetic or creative imagination.

If we go anywhere we'll go together to meet what happens,
 May-be we'll be better off and blither, and learn something,
 May-be it is yourself now really ushering me to the true songs, (who knows?)
 May-be it is you the mortal knob really undoing, turning—so now finally,
 Good-bye—and hail' my Fancy.
 1891

1891-92

FROM

Democratic Vistas ⁷²

As the greatest lessons of Nature through the universe are perhaps the lessons of variety and freedom, the same present the greatest lessons also in New World politics, and progress. If a man were ask'd, for instance, the distinctive points contrasting modern European and American political and other life with the old Asiatic cultus, as lingering-bequeath'd yet in China and Turkey, he might find the amount of them in John Stuart Mill's profound essay on Liberty in the future, where he demands two main constituents, or sub-strata, for a truly grand nationality—1st, a large variety of character—and 2d, full play for human nature to expand itself in numberless and even conflicting directions—(seems to be for general humanity much like the influences that make up, in their limitless field, that perennial health-action of the air we call the weather—an infinite number of currents and forces, and contributions, and temperatures, and cross purposes, whose ceaseless play of counterpart upon counterpart brings constant restoration and vitality.) With this thought—and not for itself alone, but all it necessitates, and draws after it—let me begin my speculations.

America, filling the present with greatest deeds and problems cheerfully accepting the past, including feudalism, (as, indeed the present is but the legitimate birth of the past, including feudalism,) counts, as I reckon, for her justification and success, (for who, as yet, dare claim success?) almost entirely on the future. Nor is that hope unwarranted. To-day, 30 ahead, though dimly yet, we see, in vistas, a copious, sane, gigantic offspring. For our New World I con-

sider far less important for what it has done, or what it is, than for results to come. Sole among nationalities, these States have assumed the task to put in forms of lasting power and practicality, on areas of amplitude rivaling the operations of the physical kosmos, the moral political speculations of ages, long, long deferr'd, the democratic republican principle, and the theory of development and perfection by voluntary standards, and self-reliance. Who else, indeed, except the United States, in history, so far, have accepted in unwitting faith, and, as we now see, stand, act upon, and go security for, these things?

But precluding no longer, let me strike the key-note of the following strain. First premising that, though the passages of it have been written at widely different times, (it is, in fact, a collection of memoranda, perhaps for future designers, comprehenders,) and though it may be open to the charge of one part contradicting another—for there are opposite sides to the great question of democracy, as to every great question—I feel the parts harmoniously blended in my own realization and convictions, and present them to be read only in such oneness, each page and each claim and assertion modified and temper'd by the others. Bear in mind, too, that they are not the result of studying up in political economy, but of the ordinary sense, observing, wandering among men, these States, these stirring years of war and peace. I will not gloss over the appalling dangers of universal suffrage in the United States. In fact, it is to admit and face these dangers I am writing. To him or her within whose thought rages the battle, advancing, re-

⁷² This little book, published in 1871, was Whitman's first serious contributions to prose literature. Many of the ideas in it were first expressed in the 1855 Preface, and touched upon in various poems, such as "Song of Myself," "Salut au Monde!" "Starting from Paumanok," etc. The essay grew out of two short papers which Whitman had published in *The Galaxy* magazine in 1867-68. The first of these, "Democracy," was an attempt to answer Carlyle's attack on democracy in *Shooting Niagara*,

though the more Whitman thought of the problem, the more he came to agree with Carlyle's criticisms. The second paper was an essay on "Personalism," the central doctrine in *Democratic Vistas*, giving hope for the future. Despite the moral and political corruption in America following the Civil War, Whitman still believed that the democratic form of government could be "a training school for making first class men." See *Walt Whitman Handbook*, pp. 186-192.

treating, between democracy's convictions, aspirations, and the people's crudeness, vice, caprices, I mainly write this essay I shall use the words America and democracy as convertible terms Not an ordinary one is the issue The United States are destined either to surmount the gorgeous history of feudalism, or else prove the most tremendous failure of time Not the least doubtful am I on any prospects of their material success The triumphant future of their business, geographic and productive departments, on larger scales and in more varieties than ever, is certain In those respects the republic must soon (if she does not already) outstrip all examples hitherto afforded, and dominate the world *

Admitting all this, with the priceless value of our political institutions, general suffrage, (and fully acknowledging the latest, widest opening of the doors,) I say that, far deeper than these, what finally and only is to make of our western world a nationality superior to any hither known, and outtopping the past, must be vigorous yet unsuspected Literatures, perfect personalities and sociologies, original, transcendental, and expressing (what, in highest sense, are not yet express'd at all,) democracy and the modern With these, and out of these, I promulge new races of Teachers, and of perfect Women, indispensable to endow the birth-stock of a New World For feudalism, caste, the ecclesiastic traditions, though palpably retreating from political institutions, still hold essentially, by their spirit, even in this country, entire possession of the more important fields, indeed the

* "From a territorial area of less than nine hundred thousand square miles, the Union has expanded into over four millions and a half—fifteen times larger than that of Great Britain and France combined—with a shoreline, including Alaska, equal to the entire circumference of the earth and with a domain within those lines far wider than that of the Romans in their proudest days of conquest and renown With a river, lake and coastwise commerce estimated at over two thousand millions of dollars per year with a railway traffic of four to six thousand millions per year, and the annual domestic exchanges of the country running up to nearly ten thousand millions per year, with over two thousand millions of dollars invested in manufacturing, mechanical, and mining industry, with over five hundred millions of acres of land in actual occupancy, valued, with their appurtenances, at over seven thousand millions of dollars, and producing annually crops valued at over three thousand millions of dollars, with a realm which, if the density of Belgium's population were possible would be vast enough to include all the present inhabitants of the world, and with equal rights guaranteed to even the poorest and humblest of our forty millions of people—we can with a manly pride akin to that which distinguish'd the palmyest

very subsoil, of education, and of social standards and literature

I say that democracy can never prove itself beyond cavil, until it founds and luxuriantly grows its own forms of art, poems schools, theology, displacing all that exists, or that has been produced anywhere in the past, under opposite influences It is curious to me that while so many voices, pens, minds, in the press, lecture-rooms, in our Congress, &c, are discussing intellectual topics, pecuniary dangers, legislative problems, the suffrage, tariff and labor questions, and the various business and benevolent needs of America, with propositions, remedies, often worth deep attention, there is one need, a hiatus the profoundest, that no eye seems to perceive, no voice to state Our fundamental want to day in the United States, with closest, amplest reference to present conditions, and to the future, is of a class, and the clear idea of a class, of native authors, literatures, far different, far higher in grade than any yet known, sacerdotal, modern, fit to cope with our occasions, lands, permeating the whole mass of American mentality, taste, belief, breathing into it a new breath of life, giving it decision, affecting politics far more than the popular superficial suffrage, with results inside and underneath the elections of Presidents or Congresses—radiating, begetting appropriate teachers, schools, manners, and, as its grandest result, accomplishing, (what neither the schools nor the churches and their clergy have hitherto accomplish'd, and without which

days of Rome, claim," &c, &c, &c—*Vice President Colfax's Speech, July 4, 1870*

LATER—London "*Times*," (Weekly,) June 23, '82

"The wonderful wealth producing power of the United States defies and sets at naught the grave drawbacks of a mischievous protective tariff, and has already obliterated, almost wholly, the traces of the greatest of modern civil wars What is especially remarkable in the present development of American energy and success is its wide and equitable distribution North and south, east and west, on the shores of the Atlantic and the Pacific along the chain of the great lakes, in the valley of the Mississippi, and on the coasts of the Gulf of Mexico the creation of wealth and the increase of population are signally exhibited It is quite true, as has been shown by the recent apportionment of population in the House of Representatives, that some sections of the Union have advanced, relatively to the rest, in an extraordinary and unexpected degree But this does not imply that the States which have gain'd no additional representatives or have actually lost some have been stationary or have receded The fact is that the present tide of prosperity has risen so high that it has overflow'd all barriers, and has fill'd up the backwaters, and establish'd something like an approach to uniform success"

this nation will no more stand, permanently, soundly, than a house will stand without a substratum,) a religious and moral character beneath the political and productive and intellectual bases of the States. For know you not, dear, earnest reader, that the people of our land may all read and write, and may all possess the right to vote—and yet the main things may be entirely lacking?—(and this to suggest them)

View'd, to-day, from a point of view sufficiently over-arching, the problem of humanity all over the civilized world is social and religious, and is to be finally met and treated by literature. The priest departs, the divine literatus comes. Never was anything more wanted than, to-day, and here in the States, the poet of the modern is wanted, or the great literatus of the modern. At all times, perhaps, the central point in any nation, and that whence it is itself really sway'd the most, and whence it sways others, is its national literature, especially its archetypal poems. Above all previous lands, a great original literature is surely to become the justification and reliance, (in some respects the sole reliance,) of American democracy.

Few are aware how the great literature penetrates all, gives hue to all, shapes aggregates and individuals, and, after subtle ways, with irresistible power, constructs, sustains, demolishes at will. Why tower, in reminiscence, above all the nations of the earth, two special lands, petty in themselves, yet inexpressibly gigantic, beautiful, columnar? Immortal Judah lives, and Greece immortal lives, in a couple of poems.

Nearer than this. It is not generally realized, but it is true, as the genius of Greece, and all the sociology, personality, politics and religion of those wonderful states, resided in their literature or esthetics, that what was afterwards the main support of European chivalry, the feudal, ecclesiastical, dynastic world over there—forming its osseous structure, holding it together for hundreds, thousands of years, preserving its flesh and bloom, giving it form, decision, rounding it out, and so saturating it in the conscious and unconscious blood, breed, belief, and intuitions

of men, that it still prevails powerful to this day, in defiance of the mighty changes of time—was its literature, permeating to the very marrow, especially that major part, its enchanting songs, ballads, and poems.*

To the ostent of the senses and eyes, I know, the influences which stamp the world's history are wars, uprisings or downfalls of dynasties, changeful movements of trade, important inventions, navigation, military or civil governments, advent of powerful personalities, conquerors, &c. These of course play their part, yet, it may be, a single new thought, imagination, abstract principle, even literary style, fit for the time, put in shape by some great literatus, and projected among mankind, may duly cause changes, growths, removals, greater than the longest and bloodiest war, or the most stupendous merely political, dynastic, or commercial overturn.

In short, as, though it may not be realized, it is strictly true, that a few first-class poets, philosophers, and authors, have substantially settled and given status to the entire religion, education, law, sociology, &c., of the hitherto civilized world, by tingeing and often creating the atmospheres out of which they have arisen, such also must stamp, and more than ever stamp, the interior and real democratic construction of this American continent, to-day, and days to come. Remember also this fact of difference, that, while through the antique and through the mediæval ages, highest thoughts and ideals realized themselves, and their expression made its way by other arts, as much as, or even more than by, technical literature, (not open to the mass of persons, or even to the majority of eminent persons,) such literature in our day and for current purposes, is not only more eligible than all the others arts put together, but has become the only general means of morally influencing the world. Painting, sculpture, and the dramatic theatre, it would seem, no longer play an indispensable or even important part in the workings and mediumship of intellect, utility, or even high esthetics. Architecture remains, doubtless with capacities, and a real future. Then music, the combiner, nothing more spiritual, nothing more sen-

Spanish poems and poets of Calderon's time. Then always, and, of course, as the superbest poetic culmination-expression of feudalism, the Shakspearean dramas, in the attitudes, dialogue, characters, &c., of the princes, lords and gentlemen, the pervading atmosphere, the implied and express'd standard of manners, the high port and proud stomach, the regal embroidery of style, &c.

* See, for hereditaments, specimens, Walter Scott's *Border Minstrelsy*, Percy's collection, Ellis's early English Metrical Romances, the European continental poems of Walter of Aquitania, and the *Nibelungen*, of pagan stock, but monkish-feudal redaction, the history of the *Troubadours*, by Faurel; even the far-back cumbrous old Hindu epics, as indicating the Asian eggs out of which European chivalry was hatch'd, Ticknor's chapters on the *Cid*, and on the

suous, a god, yet completely human, advances, prevails, holds highest place, supplying in certain wants and quarters what nothing else could supply Yet in the civilization of to day it is undeniable that, over all the arts, literature dominates, serves beyond all—shapes the character of church and school—or, at any rate, is capable of doing so Including the literature of science, its scope is indeed unparallel'd

Before proceeding further, it were perhaps well to discriminate on certain points Literature tills its crops in many fields, and some may flourish, while others lag What I say in these Vistas has its main bearing on imaginative literature, especially poetry, the stock of all In the department of science, and the specialty of journalism, there appear, in these States, promises, perhaps fulfilments, of highest earnestness, reality, and life These, of course, are modern But in the region of imaginative, spinal and essential attributes, something equivalent to creation is, for our age and lands, imperatively demanded 20 For not only is it not enough that the new blood, new frame of democracy shall be vivified and held together merely by political means, superficial suffrage, legislation, &c, but it is clear to me that, unless it goes deeper, gets at least as firm and as warm a hold in men's hearts, emotions and belief, as, in their days, feudalism or ecclesiasticism, and inaugurates its own perennial sources, welling from the centre forever, its strength will be defective, its growth doubtful, and its main charm wanting I suggest, therefore, 30 the possibility, should some two or three really original American poets, (perhaps artists or lecturers,) arise, mounting the horizon like planets, stars of the first magnitude, that, from their eminence, fusing contributions, races, far localities, &c, together, they would give more compaction and more moral identity, (the quality to day most needed,) to these States, than all its Constitutions, legislative and judicial ties, and all its hitherto political wallike, or materialistic experiences As, for instance, there could 40 hardly happen anything that would more serve the States, with all their variety of origins, their diverse climes, cities, standards, &c, than possessing an aggregate of heroes, characters, exploits, sufferings, prosperity or misfortune, glory or disgrace, common to all, typical of all—no less, but even greater would it be to possess the aggregation of a cluster of mighty poets, artists, teachers, fit for us, national expressers, comprehending and effusing for the men and women

of the States, what is universal, native, common to all, inland and seaboard, northern and southern The historians say of ancient Greece, with her ever-jealous autonomies, cities, and states, that the only positive unity she ever own'd or receiv'd, was the sad unity of a common subjection, at the last, to foreign conquerors Subjection, aggregation of that sort, is impossible to America, but the fear of conflicting and irreconcilable interiors, and the lack of a common skeleton, knitting all close, continually haunts me Or, if it does not, nothing is plainer than the need, a long period to come, of a fusion of the States into the only reliable identity, the moral and artistic one For, I say, the true nationality of the States, the genuine union, when we come to a mortal crisis, is, and is to be, after all, neither the written law, nor, (as is generally supposed,) either self-interest, or common pecuniary or material objects—but the fervid and tremendous IDEA, melting everything else with resistless heat, and solving all lesser and definite distinctions in vast, indefinite, spiritual, emotional power

It may be claim'd, (and I admit the weight of the claim,) that common and general worldly prosperity, and a populace well-to-do, and with all life's material comforts, is the main thing, and is enough It may be argued that our republic is, in performance, really enacting to day the grandest arts poems, &c, by beating up the wilderness into fertile farms, and in her railroads, ships, machinery, &c And it may be ask'd, Are these not better, indeed, for America, than any utterances even of greatest rhapsode, artist, or literatus?

I too hail those achievements with pride and joy then answer that the soul of man will not with such only—nay, not with such at all—be finally satisfied, but needs what, (standing on these and on all things, as the feet stand on the ground,) is address'd to the loftiest, to itself alone

Out of such considerations, such truths, arises for treatment in these Vistas the important question of character, of an American stock-personality, with literatures and arts for outlets and return expressions, and, of course, to correspond, within outlines common to all To these, the main affair, the thinkers of the United States, in general so acute, have either given feeblest attention, or have remain'd, and remain, in a state of somnolence

For my part, I would alarm and caution even the political and business reader, and to the utmost extent, against the prevailing delusion that the establishment of free political institutions, and plentiful intellectual smartness, with general good order, physical plenty, industry, &c., (desirable and precious advantages as they all are,) do, of themselves, determine and yield to our experiment of democracy the fruitage of success. With such advantages at present fully, or almost fully, possess'd—the Union ¹⁰ just issued, victorious, from the struggle with the only foes it need ever fear, (namely, those within itself, the interior ones,) and with unprecedented materialistic advancement—society, in these States, is canker'd, crude, superstitious, and rotten. Political, or law-made society is, and private, or voluntary society, is also. In any vigor, the element of the moral conscience, the most important, the verteber to State or man, seems to me either entirely lacking, or seriously enfeebled or ungrown.

I say we had best look our times and lands searchingly in the face, like a physician diagnosing some deep disease. Never was there, perhaps, more holowness at heart than at present, and here in the United States. Genuine belief seems to have left us. The underlying principles of the States are not honestly believ'd in, (for all this hectic glow, and these melodramatic screamings,) nor is humanity itself believ'd in. What penetrating eye does not everywhere see through the mask? The spectacle is ap- ³⁰ palling. We live in an atmosphere of hypocrisy throughout. The men believe not in the women, nor the women in the men. A scornful superciliousness rules in literature. The aim of all the *littérateurs* ⁷³ is to find something to make fun of. A lot of churches, sects, &c., the most dismal phantasms I know, usurp the name of religion. Conversation is a mass of badinage. From deceit in the spirit, the mother of all false deeds, the offspring is already incalculable. An acute and candid person, in the ⁴⁰ revenue department in Washington, who is led by the course of his employment to regularly visit the cities, north, south and west, to investigate frauds, has talk'd much with me about his discoveries. The depravity of the business classes of our country is not less than has been supposed, but infinitely greater. The official services of America, national, state, and municipal, in all their branches and departments,

⁷³ Literary minds (conventional).

except the judiciary, are saturated in corruption, bribery, falsehood, mal-administration, and the judiciary is tainted. The great cities reek with respectable as much as non-respectable robbery and scoundrelism. In fashionable life, flippancy, tepid amours, weak infidelity, small aims, or no aims at all, only to kill time. In business, (this all-devouring modern word, business,) the one sole object is, by any means pecuniary gain. The magician's serpent in the fable ate up all the other serpents; and money-making is our *magician's serpent*, remaining to-day sole master of the field. The best class we show, is but a mob of fashionably dress'd speculators and vulgarians. True, indeed, behind this fantastic farce, enacted on the visible stage of society, solid things and stupendous labors are to be discover'd, existing crudely and going on in the background, to advance and tell themselves in time. Yet the truths are none the less terrible. I say that our New World democracy, however great ²⁰ a success in uplifting the masses out of their sloughs, in materialistic development, products, and in a certain highly-deceptive superficial popular intellectuality, is, so far, an almost complete failure in its social aspects, and in really grand religious, moral, literary, and esthetic results. In vain do we march with unprecedented strides to empire so colossal, out-
 vying the antique, beyond Alexander's, beyond the proudest sway of Rome. In vain have we annex'd Texas, California, Alaska, and reach north for Canada and south for Cuba. It is as if we were somehow being endow'd with a vast and more and more thoroughly-appointed body, and then left with little or no soul.

* * *

As to the political section of Democracy, which introduces and breaks ground for further and vaster sections, few probably are the minds, even in these republican States, that fully comprehend the aptness of that phrase, "THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE," which we inherit from the lips of Abraham Lincoln; a formula whose verbal shape is homely wit, but whose scope includes both the totality and all minutiae of the lesson.

The People! Like our huge earth itself, which, to ordinary scansion, is full of vulgar contradictions and offence, man, viewed in the lump, displeases, and is a constant puzzle and affront to the merely educated

classes * The rare, cosmical, artist-mind, lit with the Infinite, alone confronts his manifold and oceanic qualities—but taste, intelligence and culture, (so-called,) have been against the masses, and remain so There is plenty of glamour about the most damnable crimes and hoggish meannesses, special and general, of the feudal and dynastic world over there, with its *personnel* of lords and queens and courts, so well-dress'd and so handsome But the People are ungrammatical, untidy, and their sins gaunt and ill-bred

Literature, strictly consider'd, has never recognized the People, and, whatever may be said, does not to-day Speaking generally, the tendencies of literature, as hitherto pursued, have been to make mostly critical and querulous men It seems as if, so far, there were some natural repugnance between a literary and professional life, and the rude rank spirit of the democracies There is, in later literature, a treatment of benevolence, a charity business, rife enough it is true, but I know nothing more rare, even in this country, than a fit scientific estimate and reverent appreciation of the People—of their measureless wealth of latent power and capacity, their vast, artistic contrasts of lights and shades—with, in America, their entire reliability in emergencies, and a certain breadth of historic grandeur, of peace or war, far surpassing all the vaunted samples of book-heroes, or any *haut ton* coteries, in all the records of the world

The movements of the late secession war, and their results, to any sense that studies well and comprehends them, show that popular democracy, whatever its faults and dangers, practically justifies itself beyond the proudest claims and wildest hopes of its enthusiasts Probably no future age can know, but I well know, how the gist of this fiercest and most

* "SHOOTING NIAGARA"—I was at first roused to much anger and abuse by this essay from Mr Carlyle, so insulting to the theory of America—but happening to think afterwards how I had more than once been in the like mood, dunning which his essay was evidently cast, and seen 40 persons and things in the same light, (indeed some might say there are signs of the same feeling in these Vistas)—I have since read it again, not only as a study, expressing as it does certain judgments from the highest feudal point of view, but have read it with respect as coming from an earnest soul, and as contributing certain sharp cutting metallic grains, which, if not gold or silver, may be good hard, honest iron [This note has been shifted from a paragraph omitted here]

resolute of the world's warlike contentions resided exclusively in the unnamed, unknown rank and file, and how the brunt of its labor of death was, to all essential purposes, volunteer'd The People, of their own choice, fighting, dying for their own idea, insolently attack'd by the secession-slave-power, and its very existence imperil'd Descending to detail, entering any of the armies, and mixing with the private soldiers, we see and have seen august spectacles We have seen the alacrity with which the American-born populace, the peaceablest and most good-natured race in the world, and the most personally independent and intelligent, and the least fitted to submit to the irksomeness and exasperation of regimental discipline, sprang, at the first tap of the drum, to arms—not for gain, nor even glory, nor to repel invasion—but for an emblem, a mere abstraction—for the life, *the safety of the flag* We have seen the unequal'd docility and obedience of these soldiers We have seen them tried long and long by hopelessness, mismanagement, and by defeat, have seen the incredible slaughter toward or through which the armies, (as at first Fredericksburg, and afterward at the Wilderness,) still unhesitatingly obey'd orders to advance We have seen them in trench, or crouching behind breastwork, or tramping in deep mud, or amid pouring rain or thick-falling snow, or under forced marches in hottest summer (as on the road to get to Gettysburg)—vast suffocating swarms, divisions, corps, with every single man so grimed and black with sweat and dust, his own mother would not have known him—his clothes all dirty, stain'd and torn, with sour, accumulated sweat for perfume—many a comrade, perhaps a brother, sun-struck, staggering out, dying, by the roadside, of exhaustion—yet the great bulk bearing steadily on, cheery enough, hollow-bellied from hunger, but sinewy with unconquerable resolution

* * *

Meantime, general humanity, (for to that we return, as, for our purposes, what it really is, to bear in mind,) has always, in every department, been full of perverse maleficence, and is so yet In downcast hours the soul thinks it always will be—but soon recovers from such sickly moods I myself see clearly enough the crude, defective streaks in all the strata of the common people, the specimens and vast collections of the ignorant, the credulous, the unfit and

uncouth, the incapable, and the very low and poor. The eminent person just mention'd ⁷⁴ sincerely asks whether we expect to elevate and improve a nation's politics by absorbing such morbid collections and qualities therein. The point is a formidable one, and there will doubtless always be numbers of solid and reflective citizens who will never get over it. Our answer is general, and is involved in the scope and letter of this essay. We believe the ulterior object of political and all other government, (having, of course, ¹⁰ provided for the police, the safety of life, property, and for the basic statute and common law, and their administration, always first in order,) to be among the rest, not merely to rule, to repress disorder, &c., but to develop, to open up to cultivation, to encourage the possibilities of all beneficent and manly outcroppage, and of that aspiration for independence, and the pride and self-respect latent in all characters. (Or, if there be exceptions, we cannot, fixing our eyes on them alone, make theirs the rule for all) ²⁰

I say the mission of government, henceforth, in civilized lands, is not repression alone, and not authority alone, not even of law, nor by that favorite standard of the eminent writer, ⁷⁵ the rule of the best men, the born heroes and captains of the race, (as if such ever, or one time out of a hundred, get into the big places, elective or dynastic)—but higher than the highest arbitrary rule, to train communities through all their grades, beginning with individuals and ending there again, to rule themselves. What ³⁰ Christ appear'd for in the moral-spiritual field for human-kind, namely, that in respect to the absolute soul, there is in the possession of such by each single individual, something so transcendent, so incapable of gradations, (like life,) that, to that extent, it places all beings on a common level, utterly regardless of the distinctions of intellect, virtue, station, or any height or lowliness whatever—is talk'd in like manner, in this other field, by democracy's rule that men, the nation, as a common aggregate of ⁴⁰ living identities, affording in each a separate and complete subject for freedom, worldly thrift and happiness, and for a fair chance for growth, and for protection in citizenship, &c., must, to the political extent of the suffrage or vote, if no further, be placed, in each and in the whole, on one broad, primary, universal, common platform

The purpose is not altogether direct, perhaps it is more indirect. For it is not that democracy is of exhaustive account, in itself. Perhaps, indeed, it is, (like Nature,) of no account in itself. It is that, as we see, it is the best, perhaps only, fit and full means, formulator, general caller-forth, trainer, for the million, not for grand material personalities only, but for immortal souls. To be a voter with the rest is not so much, and this, like every institute, will have its imperfections. But to become an enfranchised man, and now, impediments removed, to stand and start without humiliation, and equal with the rest, to commence, or have the road clear'd to commence, the grand experiment of development, whose end, (perhaps requiring several generations,) may be the forming of a full-grown man or woman—that is something. To ballast the State is also secured, and in our times is to be secured, in no other way.

We do not, (at any rate I do not,) put it either on the ground that the People, the masses, even the best of them, are, in their latent or exhibited qualities, essentially sensible and good—nor on the ground of their rights; but that good or bad, rights or no rights, the democratic formula is the only safe and preservative one for coming times. We endow the masses with the suffrage for their own sake, no doubt, then, perhaps still more, from another point of view, for community's sake. Leaving the rest to the sentimentalists, we present freedom as sufficient in its scientific aspect, cold as ice, reasoning ⁵⁰ deductive, clear and passionless as crystal.

Democracy too is law, and of the strictest, amplest kind. Many suppose, (and often in its own ranks the error,) that it means a throwing aside of law, and running riot. But, briefly, it is the superior law, not alone that of physical force, the body, which, adding to, it supersedes with that of the spirit. Law is the unshakable order of the universe forever; and the law over all, and law of laws, is the law of successions; that of the superior law, in time, gradually supplanting and overwhelming the inferior one. (While, for myself, I would cheerfully agree—first covenanting that the formative tendencies shall be administer'd in favor, or at least not against it, and that this reservation be closely construed—that until the individual or community show due signs, or be so minor and fractional as not to endanger the State, the condition of authoritative tutelage may continue, and self-government must abide its time) Nor is

⁷⁴ Allusion to Thomas Carlyle, in his *Shooting Niagara*.

⁷⁵ See note 74, above

the esthetic point, always an important one without fascination for highest aiming souls The common ambition strains for elevations, to become some privileged exclusive The master sees greatness and health in being part of the mass, nothing will do as well as common ground Would you have in yourself the divine, vast, general law? Then merge yourself in it

And topping democracy, this most alluring record, that it alone can bind, and ever seeks to bind, all nations, all men, of however various and distant lands, into a brotherhood, a family It is the old, yet ever modern dream of earth, out of her eldest and her youngest, her fond philosophers and poets Not that half only, individualism, which isolates There is another half, which is adhesiveness or love, that fuses, ties and aggregates, making the races comrades, and fraternizing all Both are to be vitalized by religion, (sole worthiest elevator of man or State,) breathing into the proud, material tissues, the breath of life For I say at the core of democracy, finally, is the religious element All the religions, old and new, are there Nor may the scheme step forth, clothed in resplendent beauty and command, till these, bearing the best, the latest fruit, the spiritual, shall fully appear

* * *

Political democracy, as it exists and practically works in America, with all its threatening evils, supplies a training-school for making first-class men It is life's gymnasium, not of good only, but of all We try often, though we fall back often A brave delight, fit for freedom's athletes, fills these arenas, and fully satisfies, out of the action in them, irrespective of success Whatever we do not attain, we at any rate attain the experiences of the fight, the hardening of the strong campaign, and throb with currents of attempt at least Time is ample Let the victors come after us Not for nothing does evil play its part among us Judging from the main portions of the history of the world, so far, justice is always in jeopardy, peace walks amid hourly pitfalls, and of slavery, misery, meanness, the craft of tyrants and the credulity of the populace, in some of their protean forms, no voice can at any time say, They are not The clouds break a little, and the sun shines out—but soon and certain the lowering darkness falls again, as if to last forever Yet is there an immortal courage and prophecy in every sane soul that cannot, must not,

under any circumstances, capitulate *Vive*, the attack—the perennial assault! *Vive*, the unpopular cause—the spirit that audaciously aims—the never abandon'd efforts, pursued the same amid opposing proofs and precedents

Once, before the war, (Alas! I dare not say how many times the mood has come!) I, too, was fill'd with doubt and gloom A foreigner, an acute and good man, had impressively said to me, that day—putting in form, indeed, my own observations “I have travel'd much in the United States, and watch'd their politicians, and listen'd to the speeches of the candidates, and read the journals, and gone into the public houses, and heard the unguarded talk of men And I have found your vaunted America honeycomb'd from top to toe with infidelism, even to itself and its own programme I have mark'd the brazen hell faces of secession and slavery gazing defiantly from all the windows and doorways I have everywhere found, primarily, thieves and scalliwags arranging the nominations to offices, and sometimes filling the offices themselves I have found the north just as full of bad stuff as the south Of the holders of public office in the Nation or the States or their municipalities, I have found that not one in a hundred has been chosen by any spontaneous selection of the outsiders, the people, but all have been nominated and put through by little or large caucuses of the politicians, and have got in by corrupt rings and electioneering, not capacity or desert I have noticed how the millions of sturdy farmers and mechanics are thus the helpless supple-jacks of comparatively few politicians And I have noticed more and more the alarming spectacle of parties usurping the government, and openly and shamelessly wielding it for party purposes”

Sad, serious, deep truths Yet are there other, still deeper, amply confronting, dominating truths Over those politicians and great and little rings, and over all their insolence and wiles, and over the powerfullest parties, looms a power, too sluggish maybe, but ever holding decisions and decrees in hand, ready, with stern process, to execute them as soon as plainly needed—and at times, indeed, summarily crushing to atoms the mightiest parties, even in the hour of their pride

In saner hours far different are the amounts of these things from what, at first sight, they appear.

Though it is no doubt important who is elected governor, mayor, or legislator, (and full of dismay when incompetent or vile ones get elected, as they sometimes do,) there are other, quieter contingencies, infinitely more important Shams, &c, will always be the show, like ocean's scum, enough, if waters deep and clear make up the rest Enough, that while the piled embroider'd shoddy gaud and fraud spreads to the superficial eye, the hidden warp and weft are genuine, and will wear forever Enough, in short,¹⁰ that the race, the land which could raise such as the late rebellion, could also put it down

The average man of a land at last only is important He, in these States, remains immortal owner and boss, deriving good uses, somehow, out of any sort of servant in office, even the basest, (certain universal requisites, and their settled regularity and protection, being first secured,) a nation like ours, in a sort of geological formation state, trying continually new experiments, choosing new delegations,²⁰ is not served by the best men only, but sometimes more by those that provoke it—by the combats they arouse Thus national rage, fury, discussion, &c, better than content. Thus, also, the warning signals, invaluable for after times

What is more dramatic than the spectacle we have seen repeated, and doubtless long shall see—the popular judgment taking the successful candidates on trial in the offices—standing off, as it were, and observing them and their doings for a while, and always³⁰ giving, finally, the fit, exactly due reward? I think, after all, the sublimest part of political history, and its culmination, is currently issuing from the American people. I know nothing grander, better exercise, better digestion, more positive proof of the past, the triumphant result of faith in human kind, than a well-contested American national election.

* * *

Assuming Democracy to be at present in its embryonic condition, and that the only large and satisfactory justification of it resides in the future, mainly through the copious production of perfect characters among the people, and through the advent of a sane and pervading religiousness, it is with regard to the atmosphere and spaciousness fit for such characters, and of certain nutriment and cartoon-draftings proper for them, and indicating them for New World purposes, that I continue the present statement—an ex-

ploration, as of new ground, wherein, like other primitive surveyors, I must do the best I can, leaving it to those who come after me to do much better (The service, in fact, if any, must be to break a sort of first path or track, no matter how rude and ungeometrical.)

We have frequently printed the word Democracy. Yet I cannot too often repeat that it is a word the real gist of which still sleeps, quite unawaken'd, notwithstanding the resonance and the many angry tempests out of which its syllables have come, from pen or tongue It is a great word, whose history, I suppose, remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be enacted. It is, in some sort, younger brother of another great and often-used word, Nature, whose history also waits unwritten. As I perceive, the tendencies of our day, in the States, (and I entirely respect them,) are toward those vast and sweeping movements, influences, moral and physical, of humanity, now and always current over the planet, on the scale of the impulses of the elements. Then it is also good to reduce the whole matter to the consideration of a single self, a man, a woman, on permanent grounds Even for the treatment of the universal, in politics, metaphysics, or anything, sooner or later we come down to one single, solitary soul.

* * *

America has yet morally and artistically originated nothing. She seems singularly unaware that the models of persons, books, manners, &c, appropriate for former conditions and for European lands, are but exiles and exotics here. No current of her life, as shown on the surfaces of what is authoritatively called her society, accepts or runs into social or esthetic democracy; but all the currents set squarely against it. Never, in the Old World, was thoroughly upholster'd exterior appearance and show, mental and other, built entirely on the idea of caste, and on the sufficiency of mere outside acquisition—never were glibness, verbal intellect, more the test, the emulation—more loftily elevated as head and sample—than they are on the surface of our republican States this day The writers of a time hint the mottoes of its gods. The word of the modern, say these voices, is the word Culture.

We find ourselves abruptly in close quarters with the enemy. This word Culture, or what it has come to represent, involves, by contrast, our whole theme,

and has been, indeed, the spur, urging us to engage
 ment Certain questions arise As now taught, ac-
 cepted and carried out, are not the processes of cul-
 ture rapidly creating a class of supercilious infidels,
 who believe in nothing? Shall a man lose himself in
 countless masses of adjustments, and be so shaped
 with reference to this, that, and the other, that the
 simply good and healthy and brave parts of him are
 reduced and clipp'd away, like the bordering of box
 in a garden? You can cultivate corn and roses and 10
 orchards—but who shall cultivate the mountain
 peaks, the ocean, and the tumbling gorgeousness of
 the clouds? Lastly—is the readily-given reply that cul-
 ture only seeks to help, systematize, and put in atti-
 tude, the elements of fertility and power, a conclu-
 sive reply?

I do not so much object to the name, or word, but
 I should certainly insist, for the purposes of these
 States, on a radical change of category, in the distri-
 bution of precedence I should demand a programme 20
 of culture, drawn out, not for a single class alone, or
 for the parlors or lecture-rooms, but with an eye to
 practical life, the west, the working-men, the facts of
 farms and jack planes and engineers, and of the
 broad range of the women also of the middle and
 working strata, and with reference to the perfect
 equality of women and of a grand and powerful
 motherhood I should demand of this programme or
 theory a scope generous enough to include the widest
 human area It must have for its spinal meaning the 30
 formation of a typical personality of character, eli-
 gible to the uses of the high average of men—and not
 restricted by conditions ineligible to the masses The
 best culture will always be that of the manly and
 courageous instincts, and loving perceptions, and of
 self-respect—aiming to form, over this continent, an
 idiocracy of universalism, which, true child of Amer-
 ica, will bring joy to its mother, returning to her in
 her own spirit, recruiting myriads of offspring, able,
 natural, perceptive, tolerant, devout believers in her, 40
 America, and with some definite instinct why and
 for what she has arisen, most vast, most formidable
 of historic births, and is, now and here, with won-
 derful step, journeying through Time

The problem, as it seems to me, presented to the
 New World, is, under permanent law and order, and
 after preserving cohesion, (ensemble-Individuality,) 45
 at all hazards, to vitalize man's free play of special

Personalism, recognizing in it something that calls
 ever more to be consider'd, fed, and adopted as the
 substratum for the best that belongs to us, (govern-
 ment indeed is for it,) including the new esthetics of
 our future

To formulate beyond this present vagueness—to
 help line and put before us the species, or a specimen
 of the species, of the democratic ethnology of the
 future, is a work toward which the genius of our
 land, with peculiar encouragement, invites her well-
 wishers Already certain limnings, more or less gro-
 tesque, more or less fading and watery, have appear'd
 We too, (repressing doubts and qualms,) will try our
 hand

Attempting, then, however crudely, a basic model
 or portrait of personality for general use for the man-
 liness of the States, (and doubtless that is most use-
 ful which is most simple and comprehensive for all,
 and toned low enough,) we should prepare the canvas
 well beforehand Parentage must consider itself in
 advance (Will the time hasten when fatherhood and
 motherhood shall become a science—and the noblest
 science?) To our model, a clear blooded, strong-
 fibred physique, is indispensable, the questions of
 food, drink, air, exercise, assimilation, digestion, can
 never be intermitted Out of these we descry a well-
 begotten selfhood—in youth, fresh, ardent, emo-
 tional, aspiring, full of adventure, at maturity, brave,
 perceptive, under the control, neither too talkative
 nor too reticent, neither flippant nor sombre, of the
 bodily figure, the movements easy, the complexion
 showing the best blood, somewhat flush'd, breast ex-
 panded, an erect attitude, a voice whose sound out-
 vies music, eyes of calm and steady gaze, yet capable
 also of flashing—and a general presence that holds
 its own in the company of the highest (For it is
 native personality, and that alone, that endows a man
 to stand before presidents or generals, or in any dis-
 tinguish'd collection, with *aplomb*—and not culture,
 or any knowledge or intellect whatever)

With regard to the mental educational part of our
 model, enlargement of intellect, stores of cephalic
 knowledge, &c, the concentration thitherward of all
 the customs of our age, especially in America, is so
 overweening, and provides so fully for that part, that,
 important and necessary as it is, it really needs noth-
 ing from us here—except, indeed, a phrase of warn-
 ing and restraint Manners, costumes, too, though
 important, we need not dwell upon here Like beauty,

grace of motion, &c, they are results Causes, original things, being attended to, the right manners unerringly follow Much is said, among artists, of "the grand style," as if it were a thing by itself When a man, artist or whoever, has health, pride, acuteness, noble aspirations, he has the motive-elements of the grandest style The rest is but manipulation, (yet that is no small matter)

* * *

Arrived now, definitely, at an apex for these Vistas, I confess that the promulgation and belief in such a class or institution—a new and greater literatus order—its possibility, (nay certainty,) underlies these entire speculations—and that the rest, the other parts, as superstructures, are all founded upon it It really seems to me the condition, not only of our future national and democratic development, but of our perpetuation In the highly artificial and materialistic bases of modern civilization, with the corresponding 20 arrangements and methods of living, the force-infusion of intellect alone, the depraving influences of riches just as much as poverty, the absence of all high ideals in character—with the long series of tendencies, shapings, which few are strong enough to resist, and which now seem, with steam-engine speed, to be everywhere turning out the generations of humanity like uniform iron castings—all of which, as compared with the feudal ages, we can yet do nothing better than accept, make the best of, and even wel- 30 come, upon the whole, for their oceanic practical grandeur, and their restless wholesale kneading of the masses—I say of all this tremendous and dominant play of solely materialistic bearings upon current life in the United States, with the results as already seen, accumulating, and reaching far into the future, that they must either be confronted and met by at least an equally subtle and tremendous force-infusion for purposes of spiritualization, for the pure conscience, for genuine esthetics, and for absolute and primal 40 manliness and womanliness—or else our modern civilization, with all its improvements, is in vain, and we are on the road to a destiny, a status, equivalent, in its real world, to that of the fabled damned.

Prospecting thus the coming unsped days, and that new order in them—marking the endless train of exercise, development, unwind, in nation as in man, which life is for—we see, fore-indicated, amid these

prospects and hopes, new law-forces of spoken and written language—not merely the pedagogue forms, correct, regular, familiar with precedents, made for matters of outside propriety, fine words, thoughts definitely told out—but a language fann'd by the breath of Nature, which leaps overhead, cares mostly for impetus and effects, and for what it plants and invigorates to grow—tallics life and character, and seldomer tells a thing than suggests or necessitates it

10 In fact, a new theory of literary composition for imaginative works of the very first class, and especially for highest poems, is the sole course open to these States Books are to be call'd for, and supplied, on the assumption that the process of reading is not a half-sleep, but, in highest sense, an exercise, a gymnast's struggle, that the reader is to do something for himself, must be on the alert, must himself or herself construct indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay—the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or frame-work. Not the book needs so much to be the complete thing, but the reader of the book does That were to make a nation of supple and athletic minds, well-train'd, intuitive, used to depend on themselves, and not on a few coteries of writers

Investigating here, we see, not that it is a little thing we have, in having the bequeath'd libraries, countless shelves of volumes, records, &c, yet how serious the danger, depending entirely on them, of the bloodless vein, the nerveless arm, the false application, at second or third hand. We see that the real interest of this people of ours in the theology, history, poetry, politics, and personal models of the past, (the British islands, for instance, and indeed all the past,) is not necessarily to mould ourselves or our literature upon them, but to attain fuller, more definite comparisons, warnings, and the insight to ourselves, our own present, and our own far grander, different, future history, religion, social customs, &c. We see that almost everything that has been written, sung, or stated, of old, with reference to humanity under the feudal and oriental institutes, religions, and for other lands, needs to be re-written, re-sung, re-stated, in terms consistent with the institution of these States, and to come in range and obedient uniformity with them

We see, as in the universes of the material kosmos, after meteorological, vegetable, and animal cycles, man at last arises, born through them, to prove them,

concentrate them, turn upon them with wonder and love—to command them, adorn them, and carry them upward into superior realms—so, out of the series of the preceding social and political universes, now arise these States. We see that while many were supposing things established and completed, really the grandest things always remain, and discover that the work of the New World is not ended, but only fairly begun.

We see our land, America, her literature, esthetics, &c, as, substantially, the getting in form, or effuse-ment and statement, of deepest basic elements and loftiest final meanings, of history and man—and the portrayal, (under the eternal laws and conditions of beauty,) of our own physiognomy, the subjective tie and expression of the objective, as from our own combination, continuation, and points of view—and

the deposit and record of the national mentality, character, appeals, heroism, wars, and even liberties—where these, and all, culminate in native literary and artistic formulation, to be perpetuated, and not having which native, first class formulation, she will flounder about, and her other, however imposing, eminent greatness, prove merely a passing gleam, but truly having which, she will understand herself, live nobly, nobly contribute, emanate, and swinging, poised safely on herself, illumin'd and illuming, become a full form'd world, and divine Mother not only of maternal but spiritual worlds, in ceaseless succession through time—the main thing being the average, the bodily, the concrete, the democratic, the popular, on which all the superstructures of the future are to permanently rest.

1867-68

1871

FROM

Specimen Days ⁷⁶

Paumanok, and My Life on It As Child and Young Man

Worth fully and particularly investigating indeed this Paumanok, (to give the spot its aboriginal name,* stretching east through Kings, Queens, and Suffolk counties, 120 miles altogether—on the north Long Island sound, a beautiful, varied and picturesque series of inlets, “necks” and sea-like expansions, for a hundred miles to Orient point. On the ocean side the great south bay dotted with countless hummocks, mostly small, some quite large, occasionally long bars of sand out two hundred rods to a mile-and-a-half from the shore. While now and then, as at Rockaway and far east along the Hamptons, the beach makes right on the island, the sea dashing up without intervention. Several light-houses on the shores east, a long history of wrecks’ tragedies, some

even of late years. As a youngster, I was in the atmosphere and traditions of many of these wrecks—of one or two almost an observer. Off Hempstead beach for example, was the loss of the ship “Mexico” in 1840 (alluded to in “the Sleepers” in *L of G* ⁷⁷), And at Hampton, some years later, the destruction of the brig “Elizabeth,” a fearful affair, in one of the worst winter gales, where Margaret Fuller went down, with her husband and child ⁷⁸.

Inside the outer bars or beach this south bay is

⁷⁶ About one third of the contents of *Specimen Days* was published in 1875 in a pamphlet entitled *Memoanda during the War*. In 1882 Whitman collected this and other prose pieces, including *Democratic Vistas* into a volume essentially the same as the official *Complete Prose*.

Specimen Days is Whitman's autobiography though not presented in systematic form. The work covers three main subjects: (1) a brief autobiographical sketch, which Whitman says he wrote at the insistence of a friend in 1882, (2) war memoranda, taken from the poet's diary written in Washington and Virginia from the end of 1862 through 1865, and (3) diary and nature notes, written during convalescence, and miscellaneous short essays and articles. Groups 1 and 2 are quite literally ‘specimen experiences, without revision or literary polishing, from the poet's life during the War and his semi-idealism. They reveal the man more clearly and intimately than any of his other writings.

⁷⁷ The Sleepers appeared in the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* (though without title).

⁷⁸ Sarah Margaret Fuller, American transcendentalist and literary critic admired by Whitman, was drowned in 1850 when the ship in which she was returning from Italy with her husband, Marquis Angelo Ossoli, and child was wrecked off Fire Island, near New York City.

* “Paumanok, (or Paumanake, or Paumanack, the Indian name of Long Island,) over a hundred miles long, shaped like a fish—plenty of sea shore, sandy, stormy, uninviting, the horizon boundless, the air too strong for invalids, the bays a wonderful resort for aquatic birds, the south side meadows cover'd with salt hay, the soil of the island generally tough, but good for the locust tree, the apple orchard, and the blackberry, and with numberless springs of the sweetest water in the world. Years ago, among the bay men—a strong, wild race, now extinct, or rather entirely changed—a native of Long Island was called a *Paumanacker*, or *Creole Paumanacker*.” John Burroughs

everywhere comparatively shallow, of cold winters all thick ice on the surface. As a boy I often went forth with a chum or two, on those frozen fields, with hand-sled, axe and cel-spear, after messes of cels. We would cut holes in the ice, sometimes striking quite an cel-bonanza, and filling our baskets with great, fat, sweet, white-meat celled fellows. The scenes, the ice, drawing the hand-sled, cutting holes, spearing the cels, &c., were of course just such fun as is dearest to boyhood. The shores of this bay, winter and summer, and my doings there in early life, are woven all through L. of G. One sport I was very fond of was to go on a bay-party in summer to gather sea-gull's eggs. (The gulls lay two or three eggs, more than half the size of hen's eggs, right on the sand, and leave the sun's heat to hatch them.)

The eastern end of Long Island, the Peconic bay region, I knew quite well too—sail'd more than once around Shelter island, and down to Montauk—spent many an hour on Turtle hill by the old light-house, 20 on the extreme point, looking out over the ceaseless roll of the Atlantic. I used to like to go down there and fraternize with the blue-fishers, or the annual squads of sea-bass takers. Sometimes, along Montauk peninsula, (it is some 15 miles long, and good grazing,) met the strange, unkempt, half-barbarous herdsmen, at that time living there entirely aloof from society or civilization, in charge, on those rich pasturages, of vast droves of horses, kine or sheep, own'd by farmers of the eastern towns. Sometimes, too, the 30 few remaining Indians, or half-breeds, at that period left on Montauk peninsula, but now I believe altogether extinct.

More in the middle of the island were the spreading Hempstead plains, then (1830-'40) quite prairie-like, open, uninhabited, rather sterile, cover'd with kill-calf and huckleberry bushes, yet plenty of fair pasture for the cattle, mostly milch-cows, who fed there by hundreds, even thousands, and at evening, (the plains too were own'd by the towns, and this 40 was the use of them in common,) might be seen taking their way home branching off regularly in the right places. I have often been out on the edges of these plains toward sundown, and can yet recall in fancy the interminable cow-processions, and hear the music of the tin or copper bells clanking far or near, and breathe the cool of the sweet and slightly aromatic evening air, and note the sunset.

Through the same region of the island, but further

east, extended wide central tracks of pine and scrub-oak, (charcoal was largely made here,) monotonous and sterile. But many a good day or half-day did I have, wandering through those solitary cross-roads, inhaling the peculiar and wild aroma. Here, and all along the island and its shores, I spent intervals many years, all seasons, sometimes riding, sometimes boating, but generally afoot, (I was always then a good walker,) absorbing fields, shores, marine incidents, characters, the bay-men, farmers, pilots—always had a plentiful acquaintance with the latter, and with fishermen—went every summer on sailing trips—always liked the bare sea-beach, south side, and have some of my happiest hours on it to this day.

As I write, the whole experience comes back to me after the lapse of forty and more years—the soothing rustle of the waves, and the saline smell—boyhood's times, the clam-digging, bare foot, and with trowsers roll'd up—hauling down the creek—the perfume of the sedge-meadows—the hay-boat, and the chowder and fishing excursions,—or, of later years, little voyages down and out New York bay, in the pilot boats. Those same later years, also, while living in Brooklyn, (1835-'50) I went regularly every week in the mild seasons down to Coney island, at that time a long, bare unfrequented shore, which I had all to myself, and where I loved, after bathing, to race up and down the hard sand, and declaim Homer or Shakspeare to the surf and sea-gulls by the hour. But I am getting ahead too rapidly, and must keep more in my traces.

* * *

My Passion for Ferries

- Living in Brooklyn or New York city from this time forward, my life, then, and still more the following years, was curiously identified with Fulton ferry, already becoming the greatest of its sort in the world for general importance, volume, variety, rapidity, and picturesqueness. Almost daily, later ('50 to '60) I cross'd on the boats, often up in the pilot-houses where I could get a full sweep, absorbing shows, accompaniments, surroundings. What oceanic currents, eddies, underneath—the great tides of humanity also, with ever-shifting movements. Indeed, I have always had a passion for ferries; to me they afford inimitable, streaming, never-failing, living poems. The river and bay scenery, all about New York island, any time of a fine day—the hurrying,

splashing sea tides—the changing panorama of steamers, all sizes, often a string of big ones outward bound to distant ports—the myriads of white-sail'd schooners, sloops, skiffs, and the marvellously beautiful yachts—the majestic sound boats as they rounded the Battery and came along towards 5, afternoon, eastward bound—the prospect off towards Staten island, or down the Narrows, or the other way up the Hudson—what refreshment of spirit such sights and experiences gave me years ago (and many a time since) My old pilot friends, the Balsirs, Johnny Cole, Ira Smith, William White, and my young ferry friend, Tom Gere—how well I remember them all

Broadway Sightings

Besides Fulton ferry, off and on for years, I knew and frequented Broadway—that noted avenue of New York's crowded and mixed humanity, and of so many notables Here I saw, during those times, Andrew Jackson, Webster, Clay, Seward, Martin Van Buren, filibuster Walker, Kossuth, Fitz Greene Halleck, Bryant, the Prince of Wales, Charles Dickens, the first Japanese ambassadors, and lots of other celebrities of the time Always something novel or inspiring, yet mostly to me the hurrying and vast amplitude of those never-ending human currents I remember seeing James Fenimore Cooper in a courtroom in Chambers street, back of the city hall, where he was carrying on a law case—(I think it was a charge of libel he had brought against someone) I also remember seeing Edgar A Poe, and having a short interview with him, (it must have been in 1845 or '6,) in his office, second story of a corner building, (Duane or Pearl street) He was editor and owner or part owner of "the Broadway Journal" The visit was about a piece of mine he had publish'd Poe was very cordial, in a quiet way, appear'd well in person, dress, &c I have a distinct and pleasing remembrance of his looks voice, manner and matter, very kindly and human, but subdued, perhaps a little jaded For another of my reminiscences, here on the west side, just below Houston street, I once saw (it must have been about 1832, of a sharp, bright January day) a bent, feeble but stout-built very old man, bearded, swathed in rich furs, with a great ermine cap on his head, led and assisted, almost carried, down the steps of his high front stoop (a dozen friends and servants, emulous, carefully holding, guiding him) and then lifted and tuck'd in a gorgeous sleigh, envelop'd in

other furs, for a ride The sleigh was drawn by as fine a team of horses as I ever saw (You needn't think all the best animals are brought up nowadays, never was such horseflesh as fifty years ago on Long Island, or south, or in New York city, folks look'd for spirit and mettle in a nag, not tame speed merely) Well, I, a boy of perhaps thirteen or fourteen, stopp'd and gazed long at the spectacle of that fur swathed old man, surrounded by friends and servants, and the careful seating of him in the sleigh I remember the spirited, champing horses, the driver with his whip, and a fellow driver by his side, for extra prudence The old man, the subject of so much attention, I can almost see now It was John Jacob Astor

The years 1846, '47, and there along, see me still in New York city, working as writer and printer, having my usual good health, and a good time generally

Omnibus Jaunts and Drivers

One phase of those days must by no means go unrecorded—namely, the Broadway omnibuses, with their drivers The vehicles still (I write this paragraph in 1881) give a portion of the character of Broadway—the Fifth avenue, Madison avenue, and Twenty-third street lines yet running But the flush days of the old Broadway stages, characteristic and copious, are over The Yellow-birds, the Red birds, the original Broadway, the Fourth avenue, the Knickerbocker, and a dozen others of twenty or thirty years ago, are all gone And the men specially identified with them, and giving vitality and meaning to them—the drivers—a strange, natural, quick-eyed and wondrous race—(not only Rabelais and Cervantes would have gloated upon them, but Homer and Shakspeare would)—how well I remember them, and must here give a word about them How many hours, forenoons and afternoons—how many exhilarating night-times I have had—perhaps June or July, in cooler air—riding the whole length of Broadway, listening to some yarn, (and the most vivid yarns ever spun, and the rarest mimicry)—or perhaps I declaiming some stormy passage from Julius Cæsar or Richard, (you could roar as loudly as you chose in that heavy, dense, uninterrupted street-bass) Yes, I knew all the drivers then, Broadway Jack, Dressmaker, Bally Bill, George Storms, Old Elephant, his brother Young Elephant (who came afterward,) Tippy, Pop

Rice, Big Frank, Yellow Joe, Pete Callahan, Patsy Dees, and dozens more, for there were hundreds. They had immense qualities, largely animal—eating, drinking, women—great personal pride, in their way—perhaps a few slouches here and there, but I should have trusted the general run of them, in their simple good-will and honor, under all circumstances. Not only for comradeship, and sometimes affection—great studies I found them also (I suppose the critics will laugh heartily, but the influence of those Broadway omnibus jaunts and drivers and declamations and escapades undoubtedly enter'd into the gestation of "Leaves of Grass.")

* * *

Through Eight Years

In 1848, '49, I was occupied as editor of the "daily Eagle" newspaper, in Brooklyn. The latter year went off on a leisurely journey and working expedition (my brother Jeff with me) through all the middle States, and down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Lived awhile in New Orleans, and work'd there on the editorial staff of "daily Crescent" newspaper. After a time plodded back northward, up the Mississippi, and around to, and by way of the great lakes, Michigan, Huron, and Erie, to Niagara falls and lower Canada, finally returning through central New York and down the Hudson, traveling altogether probably 5000 miles this trip, to and fro '51, '53, occupied in house-building in Brooklyn. (For a little of the first part of that time in printing a daily and weekly paper, "the Freeman.") '55, lost my dear father this year by death. Commenced putting "Leaves of Grass" to press for good, at the job printing office of my friends, the brothers Rome, in Brooklyn, after many MS. doings and undings—(I had great trouble in leaving out the stock, "poetical" touches, but succeeded at last.) I am now (1856-'7) passing through my 37th year.

✓ Sources of Character—Results—1860

To sum up the foregoing from the outset (and, of course, far, far more unrecorded,) I estimate three leading sources and formative stamps to my own character, now solidified for good or bad, and its subsequent literary and other outgrowth—the maternal nativity-stock brought hither from far-away Netherlands, for one, (doubtless the best)—the subterranean tenacity and central bony structure (obsti-

nacy, wilfulness) which I get from my paternal English elements, for another—and the combination of my Long Island birth-spot, sea-shores, childhood's scenes, absorptions, with teeming Brooklyn and New York—with, I suppose, my experiences afterward in the secession outbreak, for the third.

For, in 1862, startled by news that my brother George, an officer in the 51st New York volunteers, had been seriously wounded (first Fredericksburg battle, December 13th,) I hurriedly went down to the field of war in Virginia. But I must go back a little.

Opening of the Secession War

News of the attack on fort Sumter and *the flag* at Charleston harbor, S. C., was receiv'd in New York city late at night (13th April, 1861,) and was immediately sent out in extras of the newspapers. I had been to the opera in Fourteenth street that night, and after the performance was walking down Broadway toward twelve o'clock, on my way to Brooklyn, when I heard in the distance the loud cries of the newsboys, who came presently tearing and yelling up the street, rushing from side to side even more furiously than usual. I bought an extra and cross'd to the Metropolitan hotel (Niblo's) where the great lamps were still brightly blazing, and, with a crowd of others, who gather'd impromptu, read the news, which was evidently authentic. For the benefit of some who had no papers, one of us read the telegram aloud, while all listen'd silently and attentively. No remark was made by any of the crowd, which had increas'd to thirty or forty, but all stood a minute or two, I remember, before they dispers'd. I can almost see them there now, under the lamps at midnight again.

National Uprising and Volunteering

I have said somewhere that the three Presidentiads preceding 1861 show'd how the weakness and wickedness of rulers are just as eligible here in America under republican, as in Europe under dynastic influences. But what can I say of that prompt and splendid wrestling with secession slavery, the arch-enemy personified, the instant he unmistakably show'd his face? The volcanic upheaval of the nation, after that firing on the flag at Charleston, proved for certain something which had been previously in great doubt, and at once substantially settled the question of disunion. In my judgment it will remain as the

grandest and most encouraging spectacle yet vouchsafed in any age, old or new, to political progress and democracy. It was not for what came to the surface merely—though that was important—but what it indicated below, which was of eternal importance. Down in the abysses of New World humanity there had form'd and harden'd a primal hard pan of national Union will, determin'd and in the majority, refusing to be tamper'd with or argued against, confronting all emergencies, and capable at any time of bursting all surface bonds, and breaking out like an earthquake. It is, indeed, the best lesson of the century, or of America, and it is a mighty privilege to have been part of it. (Two great spectacles, immortal proofs of democracy, unequal'd in all the history of the past, are furnish'd by the secession war—one at the beginning, the other at its close. Those are, the general, voluntary, arm'd upheaval, and the peaceful and harmonious disbanding of the armies in the summer of 1865.)

Contemptuous Feeling

Even after the bombardment of Sumter, however, the gravity of the revolt, and the power and will of the slave States for a strong and continued military resistance to national authority, were not at all realized at the North, except by a few. Nine-tenths of the people of the free States look'd upon the rebellion, as started in South Carolina, from a feeling one half of contempt, and the other half composed of anger and incredulity. It was not thought it would be join'd in by Virginia, North Carolina, or Georgia. A great and cautious national official predicted that it would blow over "in sixty days," and folks generally believ'd the prediction. I remember talking about it on a Fulton ferryboat with the Brooklyn mayor, who said he only "hoped the Southern fire eaters would commit some overt act of resistance, as they would then be at once so effectually squelch'd, we would never hear of secession again—but he was afraid they 40 never would have the pluck to really do anything." I remember, too, that a couple of companies of the Thirteenth Brooklyn, who rendezvou'd at the city armory, and started thence as thirty days' men, were all provided with pieces of rope, conspicuously tied to their musket-barrels, with which to bring back each man a prisoner from the audacious South, to be led in a noose, on our men's early and triumphant return!

Battle of Bull Run, July, 1861

All this sort of feeling was destin'd to be arrested and revers'd by a terrible shock—the battle of first Bull Run—certainly, as we now know it, one of the most singular fights on record. (All battles, and their results, are far more matters of accident than is generally thought, but this was throughout a casualty, a chance. Each side supposed it had won, till the last moment. One had, in point of fact, just the same right to be routed as the other. By a fiction, or series of fictions, the national forces at the last moment exploded in a panic and fled from the field.) The defeated troops commenced pouring into Washington over the Long Bridge at daylight on Monday, 22d—day drizzling all through with rain. The Saturday and Sunday of the battle (20th, 21st,) had been parch'd and hot to an extreme—the dust, the grime and smoke, in layers, sweated in, follow'd by 20 other layers again sweated in, absorb'd by those excited souls—their clothes all saturated with the clay-powder filling the air—stirr'd up everywhere on the dry roads and trodden fields by the regiments, swarming wagons, artillery, &c—all the men with this coating of murk and sweat and rain, now recoiling back, pouring over the Long Bridge—a horrible march of twenty miles, returning to Washington baffled, humiliated, panic-struck. Where are the vaunts, and the proud boasts with which you went forth? Where are your banners, and your bands of music, and your ropes to bring back your prisoners? Well, there isn't a band playing—and there isn't a flag but clings ashamed and lank to its staff.

The sun rises, but shines not. The men appear, at first sparsely and shame-faced enough, then thicker, in the streets of Washington—appear in Pennsylvania avenue, and on the steps and basement entrances. They come along in disorderly mobs, some in squads, stragglers, companies. Occasionally, a rare regiment, in perfect order, with its officers (some gaps, dead, the true braves,) marching in silence, with lowering faces, stern, weary to sinking, all black and dirty, but every man with his musket, and stepping alive, but these are the exceptions. Sidewalks of Pennsylvania avenue, Fourteenth street, &c, crowded, jam'd with citizens, darkies, clerks, every body, lookers-on, women in the windows, curious expressions from faces, as those swarms of dirt-cover'd return'd soldiers there (will they never end?)

move by; but nothing said, no comments; (half our lookers-on secesh of the most venomous kind—they say nothing, but the devil snickers in their faces.) During the forenoon Washington gets all over motley with these defeated soldiers—queer-looking objects, strange eyes and faces, drench'd (the steady rain drizzles on all day) and fearfully worn, hungry, haggard, blister'd in the feet Good people (but not over-many of them either,) hurry up something for their grub. They put wash-kettles on the fire, for 10 soup, for coffee They set tables on the side-walks—wagon-loads of bread are purchas'd, swiftly cut in stout chunks Here are two aged ladies, beautiful, the first in the city for culture and charm, they stand with store of eating and drink at an improv'd table of rough plank, and give food, and have the store replenish'd from their house every half-hour all that day, and there in the rain they stand, active, silent, white-hair'd, and give food, though the tears stream 20 down their cheeks, almost without intermission, the whole time. Amid the deep excitement, crowds and motion, and desperate eagerness, it seems strange to see many, very many, of the soldiers sleeping—in the midst of all, sleeping sound. They drop down anywhere, on the steps of houses, up close by the basements or fences, on the sidewalk, aside on some vacant lot, and deeply sleep A poor seventeen or eighteen year old boy lies there, on the stoop of a grand house; he sleeps so calmly, so profoundly. Some clutch their muskets firmly even in sleep 30 Some in squads, comrades, brothers, close together—and on them, as they lay sulkily drips the rain.

As afternoon pass'd, and evening came, the streets, the bar-rooms, knots everywhere, listeners, questioners, terrible yarns, bugaboo, mask'd batteries, our regiment all cut up, &c.—stories and story-tellers, windy, bragging, vain centres of street-crowds. Resolution, manliness, seem to have abandon'd Washington. The principal hotel, Willard's, is full of shoulder-straps—thick, crush'd, creeping with shoulder-straps. 40 (I see them, and must have a word with them There you are, shoulder-straps!—but where are your companies? where are your men? Incompetents! never tell me of chances of battle, of getting stray'd, and the like. I think this is your work, this retreat, after all. Sneak, blow, put on airs there in Willard's sumptuous parlors and barrooms, or anywhere—no explanation shall save you. Bull Run is your work; had you

been half or one-tenth worthy your men, this would never have happen'd.)

Meantime, in Washington, among the great persons and their entourage, a mixture of awful consternation uncertainty, rage, shame, helplessness, and stupefying disappointment The worst is not only imminent, but already here In a few hours—perhaps before the next meal—the secesh generals, with their victorious hordes, will be upon us. The dream of humanity, the vaunted Union we thought so strong, so impregnable—lo! it seems already smash'd like a china plate. One bitter, bitter hour—perhaps proud America will never again know such an hour She must pack and fly—no time to spare Those white palaces—the dome-crown'd capitol there on the hill, so stately over the trees—shall they be left—or destroy'd first? For it is certain that the talk among certain of the magnates and officers and clerks and officials everywhere, for twenty-four hours in and 20 around Washington after Bull Run, was loud and undisguised for yielding out and out, and substituting the southern rule, and Lincoln promptly abdicating and departing. If the secesh officers and forces had immediately follow'd, and by a bold Napoleonic movement had enter'd Washington the first day, (or even the second,) they could have had things their own way, and a powerful faction north to back them. One of our returning colonels express'd in public that night, amid a swarm of officers and gentlemen in a crowded room, the opinion that it was useless to fight, that the southerners had made their title clear, and that the best course for the national government to pursue was to desist from any further attempt at stopping them, and admit them again to the lead, on the best terms they were willing to grant. Not a voice was rais'd against this judgment, amid that large crowd of officers and gentlemen. (The fact is, the hour was one of the three or four of those crises we had then and afterward, during the fluctuations of four years, when human eyes appear'd at least just as likely to see the last breath of the Union as to see it continue.)

The Stupor Passes—Something Else Begins

But the hour, the day, the night pass'd, and whatever returns, an hour, a day, a night like that can never again return The President, recovering himself, begins that very night—sternly, rapidly sets about the task of reorganizing his forces, and placing

himself in positions for future and surer work If there were nothing else of Abraham Lincoln for his tory to stamp him with, it is enough to send him with his wreath to the memory of all future time, that he endured that hour, that day, bitterer than gall—indeed a crucifixion day—that it did not conquer him—that he unflinchingly stemm'd it, and resolv'd to lift himself and the Union out of it

Then the great New York papers at once appear'd, (commencing that evening, and following it up the next morning, and incessantly through many days afterwards,) with leaders that rang out over the land with the loudest, most reverberating ring of clearest bugles, full of encouragement, hope, inspiration, unfaltering defiance Those magnificent editorials! they never flagg'd for a fortnight The "Herald" commenced them—I remember the articles well The "Tribune" was equally cogent and inspiring—and the "Times," "Evening Post," and other principal papers, were not a whit behind They came in good time, for they were needed For in the humiliation of Bull Run, the popular feeling north, from its extreme of superciliousness, recoil'd to the depth of gloom and apprehension

(Of all the days of the war, there are two especially I can never forget Those were the day following the news, in New York and Brooklyn, of that first Bull Run defeat, and the day of Abraham Lincoln's death I was home in Brooklyn on both occasions The day of the murder we heard the news very early in the morning Mother prepared breakfast—and other meals afterward—as usual, but not a mouthful was eaten all day by either of us We each drank half a cup of coffee, that was all Little was said We got every newspaper morning and evening, and the frequent extras of that period, and pass'd them silently to each other)

Down at the Front

Falmouth, Va., *opposite Fredericksburgh,*⁷⁷ December 21, 1862 —Begin my visits among the camp hospitals in the army of the Potomac Spend a good part of the day in a large brick mansion on the banks of the Rappahannock, used as a hospital since the battle—seems to have receiv'd only the worst cases Out doors, at the foot of a tree, within ten yards of the front of the house, I notice a heap of amputated feet, legs, arms, hands, &c., a full load for a

⁷⁷ Should be spelled without the final "h"

one horse cart Several dead bodies lie near, each cover'd with its brown woolen blanket In the doorway, towards the river, are fresh graves, mostly of officers, their names on pieces of barrel staves or broken boards, stuck in the dirt (Most of these bodies were subsequently taken up and transported north to their friends) The large mansion is quite crowded upstairs and down, everything impromptu, no system, all bad enough, but I have no doubt the best that can be done, all the wounds pretty bad, some frightful, the men in their old clothes, unclean and bloody Some of the wounded are rebel soldiers and officers, prisoners One, a Mississippian, a captain, hit badly in leg, I talk'd with some time, he ask'd me for papers, which I gave him (I saw him three months afterward in Washington, with his leg amputated, doing well) I went through the rooms, downstairs and up Some of the men were dying I had nothing to give at that visit, but wrote a few letters to folks home, mothers &c Also talk'd to three or four, who seem'd most susceptible to it, and needing it

After First Fredericksburg

December 23 to 31 —The results of the late battle are exhibited everywhere about here in thousands of cases, (hundreds die every day,) in the camp, brigade, and division hospitals These are merely tents, and sometimes very poor ones, the wounded lying on the ground, lucky if their blankets are spread on layers of pine or hemlock twigs, or small leaves No cots, seldom even a mattress It is pretty cold The ground is frozen hard, and there is occasional snow I go around from one case to another I do not see that I do much good to these wounded and dying, but I cannot leave them Once in a while some youngster holds on to me convulsively, and I do what I can for him, at any rate, stop with him and sit near him for hours, if he wishes it

Besides the hospitals, I also go occasionally on long tours through the camps, talking with the men, &c Sometimes at night among the groups around the fires, in their shebang enclosures of bushes These are curious shows, full of characters and groups I soon get acquainted anywhere in camp, with officers or men, and am always well used Sometimes I go down on picket with the regiments I know best As to rations, the army here at present seems to be tolerably well supplied, and the men have enough, such as it

is, mainly salt pork and hard tack. Most of the regiments lodge in the flimsy little shelter-tents. A few have built themselves huts of logs and mud, with fire-places

* * *

Abraham Lincoln

August 12th—I see the President almost every day, as I happen to live where he passes to or from his lodgings out of town. He never sleeps at the White House during the hot season, but has quarters at a healthy location some three miles north of the city, the Soldiers' home, a United States military establishment. I saw him this morning about 8½ coming in to business, riding on Vermont avenue, near L street. He always has a company of twenty-five or thirty cavalry, with sabres drawn and held upright over their shoulders. They say this guard was against his personal wish, but he let his counselors have their way. The party makes no great show in uniform or horses. Mr. Lincoln on the saddle generally rides a good-sized, easy-going gray horse, is dress'd in plain black, somewhat rusty and dusty, wears a black stiff hat, and looks about as ordinary in attire, &c., as the commonest man. A lieutenant, with yellow straps, rides at his left, and following behind, two by two, come the cavalry men, in their yellow-striped jackets. They are generally going at a slow trot, as that is the pace set them by the one they wait upon. The sabres and accoutrements clank, and the entirely unornamental *cortège* as it trots towards Lafayette square arouses no sensation, only some curious stranger stops and gazes. I see very plainly ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S dark brown face, with the deep-cut lines, the eyes, always to me with a deep latent sadness in the expression. We have got so that we exchange bows, and very cordial ones. Sometimes the President goes and comes in an open barouche. The cavalry always accompany him, with drawn sabres. Often I notice as he goes out evenings—and sometimes in the morning, when he returns early—he turns off and halts at the large and handsome residence of the Secretary of War, on K street, and holds conference there. If in his barouche, I can see from my window he does not alight, but sits in his vehicle, and Mr. Stanton comes out to attend him. Sometimes one of his sons, a boy of ten or twelve, accompanies him, riding at his right on a pony. Earlier in the summer I occasionally saw the President and his wife, toward the latter part of the

afternoon, out in a barouche, on a pleasure ride through the city. Mrs. Lincoln was dress'd in complete black, with a long crape veil. The equipage is of the plainest kind, only two horses, and they nothing extra. They pass'd me once very close, and I saw the President in the face fully, as they were moving slowly, and his look, though abstracted, happen'd to be directed steadily in my eye. He bow'd and smiled, but far beneath his smile I noticed well the expression I have alluded to. None of the artists or pictures has caught the deep, though subtle and indirect expression of this man's face. There is something else there. One of the great portrait painters of two or three centuries ago is needed.

* * *

Down at the Front

Culpepper, Va., *Feb. '64*.—Here I am pretty well down toward the extreme front. Three or four days ago General S,⁷⁸ who is now in chief command, (I believe Meade is absent, sick,) moved a strong force southward from camp as if intending business. They went to the Rapidan, there has since been some manoeuvring and a little fighting, but nothing of consequence. The telegraphic accounts given Monday morning last, make entirely too much of it, I should say. What General S. intended we here know not, but we trust in that competent commander. We were somewhat excited, (but not so very much either,) on Sunday, during the day and night, as orders were sent out to pack up and harness, and be ready to evacuate, to fall back towards Washington. But I was very sleepy and went to bed. Some tremendous shouts arousing me during the night, I went forth and found it was from the men above mention'd, who were returning. I talk'd with some of the men; as usual I found them full of gayety, endurance, and many fine little outshows, the signs of the most excellent good manliness of the world. It was a curious sight to see those shadowy columns moving through the night. I stood unobserv'd in the darkness and watch'd them long. The mud was very deep. The men had their usual burdens, overcoats, knapsacks, guns and blankets. Along and along they filed by me, with often a laugh, a song, a cheerful word, but never once a mur-

⁷⁸ General Philip Henry Sheridan was not officially in command of the Army of the Shenandoah until August, 1864. He was promoted to brigadier general of the regular army in September, major general in November.

mur It may have been odd, but I never before so realized the majesty and reality of the American people *en masse* It fell upon me like a great awe The strong ranks moved neither fast nor slow They had march'd seven or eight miles already through the slipping unctuous mud The brave First corps stopt here The equally brave Third corps moved on to Brandy station The famous Brooklyn 14th are here, guarding the town You see their red legs actively moving everywhere Then they have a theatre of their own here They give musical performances, nearly everything done capitally Of course the audience is a jam It is good sport to attend one of these entertainments of the 14th I like to look around at the soldiers, and the general collection in front of the curtain, more than the scene on the stage

* * *

Virginia

Dilapidated, fenceless, and trodden with war as 20 Virginia is, wherever I move across her surface, I find myself rous'd to surprise and admiration What capacity for products, improvements, human life, nourishment and expansion Everywhere that I have been in the Old Dominion, (the subtle mockery of that title now!) such thoughts have fill'd me The soil is yet far above the average of any of the northern States And how full of breadth the scenery, everywhere distant mountains, everywhere convenient rivers Even yet prodigal in forest woods, and surely 30 eligible for all the fruits, orchards, and flowers The skies and atmosphere most luscious, as I feel certain, from more than a year's residence in the State, and movements hither and yon I should say very healthy, as a general thing Then a rich and elastic quality, by night and by day The sun rejoices in his strength, dazzling and burning, and yet, to me, never unpleasantly weakening It is not the panting tropical heat, but invigorates The north tempers it The nights are often unsurpassable Last evening (Feb 8,) I saw the 40 first of the new moon, the outlined old moon clear along with it, the sky and air so clear, such transparent hues of color, it seem'd to me I had never really seen the new moon before It was the thinnest cut crescent possible It hung delicate just above the sully shadow of the Blue mountains Ah, if it might prove an omen and good prophecy for this unhappy State

* * *

Deserters

Oct 24 —Saw a large squad of our own deserters, (over 300) surrounded with a cordon of arm'd guards, marching along Pennsylvania avenue The most motley collection I ever saw, all sorts of rig, all sorts of hats and caps, many fine looking young fellows, some of them shame-faced, some sickly, most of them dirty, shirts very dirty and long worn, &c They tramp'd along without order, a huge huddling mass, not in ranks I saw some of the spectators laughing but I felt like anything else but laughing These deserters are far more numerous than would be thought Almost every day I see squads of them, sometimes two or three at a time, with a small guard, sometimes ten or twelve, under a larger one (I hear that desertions from the army now in the field have often averaged 10,000 a month One of the commonest sights in Washington is a squad of deserters)

* * *

The Real War Will Never Get in the Books

And so good-bye to the war I know not how it may have been, or may be, to others—to me the main interest I found, (and still, on recollection, find,) in the rank and file of the armies, both sides, and in those specimens amid the hospitals, and even the dead on the field To me the points illustrating the latent personal character and eligibilities of these States, in the two or three millions of American young and middle-aged men, North and South, embodied in those armies—and especially the one third or one-fourth of their number, stricken by wounds or disease at some time in the course of the contest—were of more significance even than the political interests involved (As so much of a race depends on how it faces death, and how it stands personal anguish and sickness As, in the glints of emotions under emergencies, and the indirect traits and asides in Plutarch, we get far profounder clues to the antique world than all its more formal history)

Future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background of countless minor scenes and interiors, (not the official surface courteousness of the Generals, not the few great battles) of the Secession war, and it is best they should not—the real war will never get in the books In the mushy influences of current times, too, the fervid atmosphere and typical events of those years are in danger

of being totally forgotten I have at night watch'd by the side of a sick man in the hospital, one who could not live many hours I have seen his eyes flash and burn as he raised himself and recurr'd to the cruelties on his surrender'd brother, and mutilations of the corpse afterward.

Such was the war It was not a quadrille in a ball-room Its interior history will not only never be written—its practicality, minutiae of deeds and passions, will never be even suggested The actual soldier of 1862-'65, North and South, with all his ways his incredible dauntlessness, habits, practices, tastes, language, his fierce friendship, his appetite, rankness, his superb strength and animality, lawless gait, and a hundred unnamed lights and shades of camp, I say, will never be written—perhaps must not and should not be.

The preceding notes may furnish a few stray glimpses into that life, and into those lurid interiors, never to be fully convey'd to the future The hospital²⁰ part of the drama from '61 to '65, deserves indeed to be recorded Of that many-threaded drama, with its sudden and strange surprises, its confounding of prophecies, its moments of despair, the dread of foreign interference, the interminable campaigns, the bloody battles, the mighty and cumbrous and green armies, the drafts and bounties—the immense money expenditure, like a heavy-pouring constant rain—with, over the whole land, the last three years of the struggle, an unending, universal mourning-wail of³⁰ women, parents, orphans—the marrow of the tragedy concentrated in those Army Hospitals—(it seem'd sometimes as if the whole interest of the land, North and South, was one vast central hospital, and all the rest of the affair but flanges)—those forming the untold and unwritten history of the war—ininitely greater (like life's) than the few scraps and distortions that are ever told or written. Think how much, and of importance, will be—how much, civic and military, has already been—buried in the grave, in eternal⁴⁰ darkness.

An Interregnum Paragraph

Several years now elapse before I resume my diary. I continued at Washington working in the Attorney-General's department through '66 and '67, and some time afterward. In February '73 I was stricken down by paralysis, gave up my desk, and migrated to Camden, New Jersey, where I lived during '74 and '75,

quite unwell—but after that began to grow better, commenc'd going for weeks at a time, even for months, down in the country, to a charmingly reclusive and rural spot along Timber creek, twelve or thirteen miles from where it enters the Delaware river Domicil'd at the farm-house of my friends, the Staffords, near by, I lived half the time along this creek and its adjacent fields and lanes And it is to my life here that I, perhaps, owe partial recovery (a sort of second wind, or semi-renewal of the lease of life) from the prostration of 1874-'75 If the notes of that outdoor life could only prove as glowing to you, reader dear, as the experience itself was to me Doubtless in the course of the following, the fact of invalidism will crop out, (I call myself a *half-Paralytic* these days, and reverently bless the Lord it is no worse,) between some of the lines—but I get my share of fun and healthy hours, and shall try to indicate them. (The trick is, I find, to tone your wants and tastes low down enough, and make much of negatives, and of mere daylight and the skies)

New Themes Entered Upon

1876, '77 —I find the woods in mid-May and early June my best places for composition * Seated on logs or stumps there, or resting on rails, nearly all the following memoranda have been jotted down Wherever I go, indeed, winter or summer, city or country, alone at home or traveling, I must take notes—(the ruling passion strong in age and disablement, and even the approach of—but I must not say it yet.) Then underneath the following excerpts—crossing the t's and dotting the i's of certain moderate movements of late years—I am fain to fancy the foundations of quite a lesson learn'd. After you have exhausted what there is in business, politics, conviviality, love, and so on—have found that none of these finally satisfy, or per-

* Without apology for the abrupt change of field and atmosphere—after what I have put in the preceding fifty or sixty pages⁷⁹—temporary episodes, thank heaven!—I restore my book to the bracing and buoyant equilibrium of concrete outdoor Nature, the only permanent reliance for sanity of book or human life

Who knows, (I have it in my fancy, my ambition,) but the pages now ensuing may carry ray of sun, or smell of grass or corn, or call of bird, or gleam of stars by night, or snow-flakes falling fresh and mystic, to denizen of heated city house, or tired workman or workwoman?—or may be in sick-room or prison—to serve as cooling breeze, or Nature's aroma, to some fever'd mouth or latent pulse.

⁷⁹ Only a portion of these pages are reprinted here.

manently wear—what remains? Nature remains, to bring out from their torpid recesses, the affinities of a man or woman with the open air, the trees, fields, the changes of seasons—the sun by day and the stars of heaven by night We will begin from these convictions Literature flies so high and is so hotly spiced, that our notes may seem hardly more than breaths of common air, or draughts of water to drink But that is part of our lesson

Dear, soothing, healthy, restoration hours—after 10 three confining years of paralysis—after the long strain of the war, and its wounds and death

Entering a Long Farm-Lane

As every man has his hobby liking, mine is for a real farm-lane fenced by old chestnut rails gray green with dabs of moss and lichen, copious weeds and briars growing in spots athwart the heaps of strappick'd stones at the fence bases—irregular paths worn between, and horse and cow tracks—all characteristic 20 accompaniments marking and scenting the neighborhood in their seasons—apple-tree blossoms in forward April—pigs, poultry, a field of August buckwheat, and in another the long flapping tassels of maize—and so to the pond, the expansion of the creek, the secluded-beautiful, with young and old trees, and such recesses and vistas!

To the Spring and Brook

So, still sauntering on, to the spring under the 30 willows—musical as soft clinking glasses—pouring a sizeable stream, thick as my neck, pure and clear, out from its vent where the bank arches over like a great brown shaggy eyebrow or mouth-roof—gurgling, gurgling ceaselessly—meaning, saying something, of course (if one could only translate it)—always gurgling there, the whole year through—never giving out—oceans of mint, blackberries in summer—choice of light and shade—just the place for my July sunbaths and water-baths too—but mainly the inimitable 40 soft sound-gurgles of it, as I sit there hot afternoons How they and all grow into me, day after day—every thing in keeping—the wild just palpable perfume, and the dapple of leaf-shadows, and all the natural medicinal, elemental-moral influences of the spot

Babble on, O brook, with that utterance of thine! I too will express what I have gather'd in my days and progress, native, subterranean, past—and now thee Spin and wind thy way—I with thee, a little while, at

any rate As I haunt thee so often, season by season, thou knowest, reckest not me, (yet why be so certain? who can tell?)—but I will learn from thee, and dwell on thee—receive, copy, print from thee

An Early Summer Reveille

Away then to loosen, to unstring the divine bow, so tense, so long Away, from curtain, carpet, sofa, book—from “society”—from city house, street, and modern improvements and luxuries—away to the primitive winding, aforementioned wooded creek, with its untrimm'd bushes and turfy banks—away from ligatures, tight boots, buttons, and the whole cast-iron civilizee life—from entourage of artificial store, machine, studio, office, parlor—from tailordom and fashion's clothes—from any clothes, perhaps, for the nonce, the summer heats advancing, there in those watery, shaded solitudes Away, thou soul, (let me pick thee out singly, reader dear, and talk in perfect freedom, negligently, confidentially,) for one day and night at least, returning to the naked source-life of us all—to the breast of the great silent savage all-acceptive Mother Alas! how many of us are so sodden—how many have wander'd so far away, that return is almost impossible

But to my jottings, taking them as they come, from the heap, without particular selection There is little consecutiveness in dates They run any time within nearly five or six years Each was carelessly pencilled in the open air, at the time and place The printers will learn this to some vexation perhaps, as much of their copy is from those hastily written first notes

Birds Migrating at Midnight

Did you ever chance to hear the midnight flight of birds passing through the air and darkness overhead, in countless armies, changing their early or late summer habitat? It is something not to be forgotten A friend called me up just after 12 last night to mark the peculiar noise of unusually immense flocks migrating north (rather late this year) In the silence, shadow and delicious odor of the hour, (the natural perfume belonging to the night alone,) I thought it rare music You could *hear* the characteristic motion—once or twice “the rush of mighty wings,” but oftener a velvety rustle, long drawn out—sometimes quite near—with continual calls and chirps, and some song-notes It all lasted from 12 till after 2 Once in a while the species was plainly distinguishable, I could

make out the bobolink, tanager, Wilson's thrush, white-crown'd sparrow, and occasionally from high in the air came the notes of the plover.

* * *

Sea-Shore Fancies

Even as a boy, I had the fancy, the wish, to write a piece, perhaps a poem, about the sea-shore—that suggesting, dividing line, contact, junction, the solid marrying the liquid—that curious, lurking something, (as doubtless every objective form finally becomes to the subjective spirit,) which means far more than its mere first sight, grand as that is—blending the real and ideal, and each made portion of the other. Hours, days, in my Long Island youth and early manhood, I haunted the shores of Rockaway or Coney island, or away east to the Hamptons or Montauk. Once, at the latter place, (by the old lighthouse, nothing but sea-tossings in sight in every direction as far as the eye could reach,) I remember well, I felt that I must one day write a book expressing this liquid, mystic theme. Afterward, I recollect, how it came to me that instead of any special lyrical or epical or literary attempt, the sea-shore should be an invisible *influence*, a pervading gauge and tally for me, in my composition. (Let me give a hint here to young writers. I am not sure but I have unwittingly follow'd out the same rule with other powers besides sea and shores—avoiding them, in the way of any dead set at poetizing them, as too big for formal handling—quite satisfied if I could indirectly show that we have met and fused, even if only once, but enough—that we have really absorb'd each other and understand each other.)

There is a dream, a picture, that for years at intervals, (sometimes quite long ones, but surely again, in time,) has come noiselessly up before me, and I really believe, fiction as it is, has enter'd largely into my practical life—certainly into my writings, and shaped and color'd them. It is nothing more or less than a stretch of interminable white-brown sand, hard and smooth and broad, with the ocean perpetually, grandly, rolling in upon it, with slow-measured sweep, with rustle and hiss and foam, and many a thump as of low bass drums. This scene, this picture, I say, has risen before me at times for years. Sometimes I wake at night and can hear and see it plainly.

* * *

A Sun-Bath—Nakedness

Sunday, Aug. 27—Another day quite free from mark'd prostration and pain. It seems indeed as if peace and nutriment from heaven subtly filter into me as I slowly hobble down these country lanes and across fields, in the good air—as I sit here in solitude with Nature—open, voiceless, mystic, far-removed, yet palpable, eloquent Nature. I merge myself in the scene, in the perfect day. Hovering over the clear brook-water, I am sooth'd by its soft gurgle in one place, and the hoarser murmurs of its three-foot fall in another. Come, ye disconsolate, in whom any latent eligibility is left—come get the sure virtues of creek-shore, and wood and field. Two months (July and August, '77,) have I absorb'd them, and they begin to make a new man of me. Every day, seclusion—every day at least two or three hours of freedom, bathing, no talk, no bonds, no dress, no books, no manners.

Shall I tell you, reader, to what I attribute my already much-restored health? That I have been almost two years, off and on, without drugs and medicines, and daily in the open air. Last summer I found a particularly secluded little dell off one side by my creek, originally a large dug-out marl-pit, now abandon'd, fill'd with bushes, trees, grass, a group of willows, a straggling bank, and a spring of delicious water running right through the middle of it, with two or three little cascades. Here I retreated every hot day, and follow it up this summer. Here I realize the meaning of that old fellow who said he was seldom less alone than when alone. Never before did I get so close to Nature; never before did she come so close to me. By old habit, I pencill'd down from time to time, almost automatically, moods, sights, hours, tints and outlines, on the spot. Let me specially record the satisfaction of this current forenoon, so serene and primitive, so conventionally exceptional, natural.

An hour or so after breakfast I wended my way down to the recesses of the aforesaid dell, which I and certain thrushes, cat-birds, &c., had all to ourselves. A light south-west wind was blowing through the tree-tops. It was just the place and time for my Adamic air-bath and flesh-brushing from head to foot. So hanging clothes on a rail near by, keeping old broad-brim straw on head and easy shoes on feet, haven't I had a good time the last two hours! First with the stiff-elastic bristles rasping arms, breast,

sides, till they turn'd scarlet—then partially bathing in the clear waters of the running brook—taking everything very leisurely, with many rests and pauses—stepping about barefooted every few minutes now and then in some neighboring black ooze, for unctuous mud bath to my feet—a brief second and third rinsing in the crystal running waters—rubbing with the fragrant towel—slow negligent promenades on the turf up and down in the sun, varied with occasional rests, and further frictions of the bristle brush 10—sometimes carrying my portable chair with me from place to place, as my range is quite extensive here, nearly a hundred rods, feeling quite secure from intrusion, (and that indeed I am not at all nervous about, if it accidentally happens)

As I walk'd slowly over the grass, the sun shone out enough to show the shadow moving with me. Somehow I seem'd to get identity with each and every thing around me, in its condition Nature was naked, and I was also. It was too lazy, soothing, and joyous 20 equable to speculate about. Yet I might have thought somehow in this vein. Perhaps the inner never lost rapport we hold with earth, light, air, trees, &c., is not to be realized through eyes and mind only, but through the whole corporeal body, which I will not have blinded or bandaged any more than the eyes. Sweet, sane, still Nakedness in Nature! Ah if poor, sick, prurient humanity in cities might really know you once more! Is not nakedness then indecent? No, not inherently. It is your thought, your sophistication, 30 your fear, your respectability, that is indecent. There come moods when these clothes of ours are not only too irksome to wear, but are themselves indecent. Perhaps indeed he or she to whom the free exhilarating extasy of nakedness in Nature has never been eligible (and how many thousands there are!) has not really known what purity is—nor what faith or art or health really is. (Probably the whole curriculum of first class philosophy, beauty, heroism, form, illustrated by the old Hellenic race—the highest height 40 and deepest depth known to civilization in those departments—came from their natural and religious idea of Nakedness.)

Many such hours, from time to time, the last two summers—I attribute my partial rehabilitation largely to them. Some good people may think it a feeble or half-crack'd way of spending one's time and thinking. May-be it is

* * *

An Egotistical "Find"

"I have found the law of my own poems," was the unspoken but more and more decided feeling that came to me as I pass'd, hour after hour, amid all this grim yet joyous elemental abandon—this plenitude of material, entire absence of art, untrammel'd play of primitive Nature—the chasm, the gorge, the crystal mountain stream, repeated scores, hundreds of miles—the broad handling and absolute uncrampedness—the fantastic forms, bathed in transparent browns, faint reds and grays, towering sometimes a thousand, sometimes two or three thousand feet high—at their tops now and then huge masses pois'd, and mixing with the clouds, with only their outlines, hazed in misty lilac, visible ⁸⁰ ("In Nature's grandest shows," says an old Dutch writer, an ecclesiastic, "amid the ocean's depth, if so might be, or countless worlds rolling above at night, a man thinks of them, weighs all, not for themselves or the abstract, but with reference to his own personality, and how they may affect him or color his destinies.")

* * *

My Tribute to Four Poets

April 16—A short but pleasant visit to Longfellow ⁸¹ I am not one of the calling kind, but as the author of "Evangeline" kindly took the trouble to come and see me three years ago in Camden, where I was ill, I felt not only the impulse of my own pleasure on that occasion, but a duty. He was the only particular eminence I called on in Boston, and I shall not soon forget his lit up face and glowing warmth and courtesy, in the modes of what is called the old school.

And now just here I feel the impulse to interpolate something about the mighty four who stamp this first American century with its birth-marks of poetic literature. In a late magazine one of my reviewers, who ought to know better, speaks of my "attitude of contempt and scorn and intolerance" toward the leading poets—of my "deniding" them, and preaching their "uselessness." If anybody cares to know what I think—and have long thought and avow'd—about them, I am entirely willing to propound "I can't imagine any better luck befalling these States for a poetical begin

⁸⁰ Whitman visited Colorado in late 1879.

⁸¹ Whitman delivered his Lincoln Memorial Address in Boston on April 14, 1880.

ning and imitation than has come from Emerson, Longfellow, Bryant, and Whittier. Emerson, to me, stands unmistakably at the head, but for the others I am at a loss where to give any precedence. Each illustrious, each rounded, each distinctive. Emerson for his sweet, vital-tasting melody, rhym'd philosophy, and poems as amber-clear as the honey of the wild bee he loves to sing. Longfellow for rich color, graceful forms and incidents—all that makes life beautiful and love refined—competing with the singers of Europe on their own ground, and, with one exception, better and finer work than that of any of them. Bryant pulsing the first interior verse-throbs of a mighty world—bard of the river and the wood, ever conveying a taste of open air, with scents as from hayfields, grapes, birch-borders—always lurkingly fond of threnodies—beginning and ending his long career with chants of death, with here and there through all, poems, or passages of poems, touching the highest universal truths, enthusiasms, duties—morals as grim and eternal, if not as stormy and fateful, as anything in Eschylus. While in Whittier, with his special themes—(his outcropping love of heroism and war, for all his Quakerdom, his verses at times like the measur'd step of Cromwell's old veterans)—in Whittier lives the zeal, the moral energy, that founded New England—the splendid rectitude and ardor of Luther, Milton, George Fox—I must not, dare not, say the wilfulness and narrowness—though doubtless the world needs now, and always will need, almost above all, just such narrowness and wilfulness.

* * *

At Present Writing—Personal

A letter to a German friend—extract.

May 31, '82 —“From to-day I enter upon my 64th year. The paralysis that first affected me nearly ten years ago, has since remain'd, with varying course—seems to have settled quietly down, and will probably continue. I easily tire, am very clumsy, cannot walk far; but my sprints are first-rate. I go around in public almost every day—now and then take long trips, by railroad or boat, hundreds of miles—live largely in the open air—am sunburnt and stout, (weigh 190)—keep up my activity and interest in life, people, progress, and the questions of the day. About two-thirds of the time I am quite comfortable. What mentality I ever had remains entirely unaffected; though physi-

cally I am a half-paralytic, and likely to be so, long as I live. But the principal object of my life seems to have been accomplish'd—I have the most devoted and ardent of friends, and affectionate relatives—and of enemies I really make no account.”

* * *

Final Confessions—Literary Tests

So draw near their end these garrulous notes. There have doubtless occur'd some repetitions, technical errors in the consecutiveness of dates, in the minutiae of botanical, astronomical, &c., exactness, and perhaps elsewhere,—for in gathering up, writing, peremptorily dispatching copy, this hot weather, (last of July and through August, '82,) and delaying not the printers, I have had to hurry along, no time to spare. But in the deepest veracity of all—in reflections of objects, scenes, Nature's out-pourings, to my senses and receptivity, as they seem'd to me—in the work of giving those who care for it, some authentic glints, specimen-days of my life—and in the *bona fide* spirit and relations, from author to reader, on all the subjects design'd, and as far as they go, I feel to make unmitigated claims.

The synopsis of my early life, Long Island, New York city, and so forth, and the diary-jottings in the Secession war, tell their own story. My plan in starting what constitutes most of the middle of the book, was originally for hints and data of a Nature-poem that should carry one's experiences a few hours, commencing at noon-flush, and so through the after-part of the day—I suppose led to such idea by my own life-afternoon now arrived. But I soon found I could move at more ease, by giving the narrative at first hand. (Then there is a humiliating lesson one learns, in serene hours, of a fine day or night. Nature seems to look on all fixed-up poetry and art as something almost impertinent.)

Thus I went on, years following, various seasons and areas, spinning forth my thought beneath the night and stars, (or as I was confined to my room by half-sickness,) or at midday looking out upon the sea, or far north steaming over the Saguenay's black breast, jotting all down in the loosest sort of chronological order, and here printing from my impromptu notes, hardly even the seasons group'd together, or anything corrected—so afraid of dropping what smack of outdoors or sun or star-light might cling to the lines, I dared not try to meddle with or smooth

them Every now and then, (not often, but for a foil,) I carried a book in my pocket—or perhaps tore out from some broken or cheap edition a bunch of loose leaves, most always had something of the sort ready, but only took it out when the mood demanded In that way, utterly out of reach of literary conventions, I re-read many authors

I cannot divest my appetite of literature, yet I find myself eventually trying it all by Nature—*first premises* many call it, but really the crowning results of all, laws, tallies and proofs (Has it never occur'd to any one how the last deciding tests applicable to a book are entirely outside of technical and grammatical ones, and that any truly first class production has little or nothing to do with the rules and calibres of ordinary critics? or the bloodless chalk of Allibone's Dictionary? I have fancied the ocean and the daylight the mountain and the forest, putting their spirit in a judgment on our books I have fancied some disembodied human soul giving its verdict)

Nature and Democracy—Morality

Democracy most of all affiliates with the open air, is sunny and hardy and sane only with Nature—just as much as Art is Something is required to temper both—to check them, restrain them from excess, morbidity I have wanted, before departure, to bear

special testimony to a very old lesson and requisite American Democracy, in its myriad personalities, in factories, work shops, stores, offices—through the dense streets and houses of cities, and all their manifold sophisticated life—must either be fibred, vitalized, by regular contact with out door light and air and growths, farm scenes, animals, fields, trees, birds, sun-warmth and free skies, or it will certainly dwindle and pale We cannot have grand races of mechanics, work people, and commonalty, (the only specific purpose of America,) on any less terms I conceive of no flourishing and heroic elements of Democracy in the United States, or of Democracy maintaining itself at all, without the Nature element forming a main part—to be its health-element and beauty element—to really underlie the whole politics, sanity, religion and art of the New World

Finally, the mortality "Virtue," said Marcus Aurelius,⁸² "what is it, only a living and enthusiastic sympathy with Nature?" Perhaps indeed the efforts of the true poets, founders, religions, literatures, all ages, have been, and ever will be, our time and times to come, essentially the same—to bring people back from their persistent strayings and sickly abstractions, to the costless average, divine, original concrete ,

1875

1882

Preface Note to 2d Annex

CONCLUDING L OF G—1891

Had I not better withhold (in this old age and paralysis of me) such little tags and fringe-dots (maybe specks, stains,) as follow a long dusty journey, and witness it afterward? I have probably not been enough afraid of careless touches, from the first—and am not now—nor of parrot-like repetitions—nor platitudes and the commonplace Perhaps I am too democratic for such avoidances Besides, is not the verse-field, as originally plann'd by my theory, now sufficiently illustrated—and full time for me to silently retire?—(indeed amid no loud call or market for my sort of poetic utterance)

In answer, or rather defiance, to that kind of well-put interrogation, here comes this little cluster, and conclusion of my preceding clusters Though not at all clear that, as here collated, it is worth printing (certainly I have nothing fresh to write)—I while

away the hours of my 72d year—hours of forced confinement in my den—by putting in shape this small old age collation

Last droplets of and after spontaneous rain,
From many limpid distillations and past showers,
(Will they germinate anything? mere exhalations as they
all are—the land's and sea's—America's,
Will they filter to any deep emotion? my heart and brain?)

However that may be, I feel like improving to-day's opportunity and wind up During the last two years I have sent out, in the lulls of illness and exhaustion, certain chirps—lingering-dying ones probably (undoubtedly)—which now I may as well gather and put in fair type while able to see correctly—(for my eyes

⁸² Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (121-180), Roman emperor, whose *Meditations*, private devotional memoranda written in Greek, was one of Whitman's favorite books (in translation)

plainly warn me they are dimming, and my brain more and more palpably neglects or refuses, month after month, even slight tasks or revisions).

In fact, here I am these current years 1890 and '91, (each successive fortnight getting stiffer and stuck deeper) much like some hard-cased dilapidated grim ancient shell-fish or time-bang'd conch (no legs, utterly non-locomotive) cast up high and dry on the shore-sands, helpless to move anywhere—nothing left but behave myself quiet, and while away the days yet ¹⁰ assign'd, and discover if there is anything for the said grim and time-bang'd conch to be got at last out of inherited good spirits and primal buoyant centre-pulses down there deep somewhere within his gray-blurr'd old shell. (Reader, you must allow a little fun here—for one reason there are too many of the following poemets about death, &c, and for another the passing hours (July 5, 1890) are so sunny-fine. And old as I am I feel to-day almost a part of some frolicsome wave, or for sporting yet like a kid ²⁰ or kitten—probably a streak of physical adjustment and perfection here and now. I believe I have it in me perennially anyhow.)

Then behind all, the deep-down consolation (it is a glum one, but I dare not be sorry for the fact of it in the past, nor refrain from dwelling, even vaunting here at the end) that this late-years palsied old shorn and shell-fish condition of me is the indubitable outcome and growth, now near for 20 years along, of too over-zealous, over-continued bodily and emotional excitement and action through the times of 1862, '3, '4, and '5, visiting and waiting on wounded and sick army volunteers, both sides, in campaigns or contests, or after them, or in hospitals or fields south of Washington City, or in that place and elsewhere—those hot, sad, wrenching times—the army volunteers, all States—or North or South—the wounded, suffering, dying—the exhausting, sweating summers, marches, battles, carnage—those trenches hurriedly heap'd by the corpse-thousands, mainly unknown—Will the America of the future—will this vast rich Union ever realize what itself cost, back there after all?—those ¹⁸⁹¹ hecatombs of battle-deaths—Those times of which, O far-off reader, this whole book is indeed finally but a reminiscent memorial from thence by me to you? ¹⁸⁹²

SIDNEY LANIER (1842-1881)

"The life and song of Sidney Lanier are so intimately related, and the frustrations that beset his ambition for achievement as an artist so poignant," writes Professor Charles R. Anderson, the general editor of the Centennial Edition of Lanier's collected *Works*, "that the tendency has been to lose the poems in the poet." This fact constitutes the first problem for the modern student of Lanier. A poet should be judged on the basis of his literary merit, but even today the story of Lanier's gallant and tragic struggle against ill health, poverty, and other handicaps dwarfs the poems.

Another difficulty for many readers of Lanier is the extent to which his thought and expression were permeated by the region and culture in which he grew up. Though the South may have colored Poe's sensitive imagination, his poems and stories are as easily appreciated by a Northern or a Western as a Southern reader. But Lanier's sentiment, his luxuriant diction, his vicarious feudalism, and his justifiable self-pity are Southern. Some years ago Gamaliel Bradford expressed it in this way in *American Portraits*:

He was a Southerner, always a Southerner. He loved the South, and the South loved and loves him. And in his day the spur of that glorious spirit, ever toiling, ever hoping, giving up all material success for the long pursuit of an ideal, was the very stimulus that the young men of the South needed above all others. Who shall say that the young men of the whole country do not need and cannot profit by it now?

Though Sidney Lanier later shared to the fullest extent the Southern dream of a new Athens, in which every street would be lined with statuary and every hamlet would have its Plato, the town in which he was born, Macon, Georgia, was neither aristocratic nor feudal like the great plantations around Charleston. It was, in fact, a thriving commercial town, a stop-over for the stagecoaches from New York to New Orleans and the chief cotton market in Middle Georgia (Atlanta developed later).

Family legend has it that the Laniers were of Huguenot origin, but we first find the American branch living in Virginia, with large estates and ample

income. The poet's grandfather migrated from Virginia to Georgia, where he became a prosperous hotel proprietor. The father of the poet, Robert Sampson Lanier, graduated from Randolph Macon College, studied law, and attempted to practice in Macon. He seems not to have been outstandingly successful as a lawyer, but his family apparently lived comfortably before the War of Secession. He married Mary Jane Anderson of Virginia, of Scotch Presbyterian ancestry, a lover of poetry and music. With their three children, Sidney, Clifford, and Gertrude, they were almost idyllically happy. The family devotion was so strong, indeed, that Aubrey Starke, author of the definitive biography of the poet, thinks it may have been an unhealthy influence.

In Lanier's youth Macon had no public schools, and he first attended a private one-room school, then Bibb County Academy. At home he absorbed the rudiments of music and quickly learned to play almost any instrument. The violin was his favorite, but his father, believing that playing it overstimulated his delicate nervous system, encouraged him to play the flute. For his flute-playing he gained the reputation of a child prodigy. Meanwhile he eagerly devoured the romances of Scott, Bulwer, Froissart, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Malory Froissart, whom he later edited for boys, always remained a favorite. This taste for feudal romance and chivalry was typical of the whole South before the Civil War, but Lanier was so deeply impressed that he never ceased to think of himself as a Christian knight, and the imagery of chivalry permeates his mature poetry and prose.

At the age of fifteen Lanier entered Oglethorpe University, a Presbyterian college at Midway, two miles from Milledgeville, then capital of Georgia. After taking examinations, he was admitted as a sophomore. Although he spent much time in playing his flute and in serenading young ladies, he did well in his studies, especially in mathematics. He also extended his reading, becoming acquainted through Carlyle with such German romantic writers as Jean Paul and Novalis, who encouraged him in his fondness for reverie and trance-like day-dreaming. Possibly these moods of extreme sentiment influenced

his father to withdraw him from college for a year at the end of his junior year. But after clerking for twelve months in the Macon post office, Lanier returned to Oglethorpe in 1859. Meanwhile Professor James Woodrow, who had studied under Agassiz at Harvard and taken a Ph.D. at Heidelberg, had joined the faculty, and he exerted a profound influence on young Lanier. Professor Woodrow's field was natural science, but he was also deeply interested in literature and religion. Lanier's own interest in science, and its relation to other fields, was undoubtedly first awakened by this gifted teacher—whose own attempts to reconcile science and religion brought him into conflict with Presbyterian orthodoxy and resulted in 1888 in his being tried by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and convicted of heresy.

After his graduation in 1860 Lanier was appointed a tutor in Greek, and he decided to prepare for his new duties by taking a vacation at his grandfather's summer resort in the mountains of eastern Tennessee. The scenery and the delightful experiences of this summer were to be utilized later in his immature novel, *Tiger-Lilies*. How successful Lanier was in teaching Greek we do not know, for the accounts of this year emphasize only his continued enjoyment of music and his experiments in writing poetry. His brother Clifford remembered the poems as "Byronesque, if not Wertheresque" and "tinged with gloominess." Lanier also began collecting notes for an ambitious poem on the Jacquerie rebellion in fourteenth-century France, a project on which he worked, off and on, for many years but never completed. More important, during this year of tutoring Greek the young poet-musician was taking stock of his talents and trying to decide upon his career. He knew his "natural bent" to be music and was confident that his musical talent was "extraordinary": "But I cannot bring myself to believe," he confided to his notebook, "that I was intended for a musician, because it seems so small a business in comparison with other things which, it seems to me, I might do. Question here: 'What is the province of music in the economy of the world?'"

This divided mind in the choice of a career haunted Lanier until the last few years of his life, when he fortunately found means of combining his interests and his talents. At Oglethorpe the choice was mainly between science and music, for Professor Woodrow had fired him with the desire to take a Ph.D. at Heidelberg, as he had done. Later the choice was between poetry and music. But whatever he did, music was never absent from his life.

The outbreak of hostilities between the Northern

and Southern states decided Lanier's activities for the duration of the war. Like most young men North and South, he responded eagerly in the spring of 1861 to the popular state of mind which he later described with a tinge of ironic disillusionment in *Tiger-Lilies*:

An afflatus of war was breathed upon us. Like a great wind, it drew on and blew upon men, women, and children. Its sound mingled with the solemnity of the church-organs and arose with the earnest words of preachers praying for guidance in the matter. It sighed in the half-breathed words of sweethearts conditioning lovers with war-services. It thundered splendidly in the impassioned appeals of orators to the people. It whistled through the streets, it stole in to the firesides, it clinked glasses in bar-rooms, it lifted the gray hairs of our wise men in conventions, it thrilled through the lectures in college halls, it rustled the thumbled book-leaves of the school-rooms.

"Who could have resisted," the author asks, "the fair anticipations which the new war-idea brought?" Certainly an emotional and patriotic young man like Sidney Lanier could not. He promptly joined the Confederate Army and marched off to war with his beloved flute in his knapsack. At first he had light picket duty and lived like a gay troubadour, entertaining the camp with his music, making love to responsive young ladies, and confident, as he bitterly confessed after the war, that the South could whip five Norths. But at Drury's Bluff, near Richmond, he experienced the horrors of battle, and in the Mounted Signal Service he fought at Chancellorsville.

On a furlough in the spring of 1863 Lanier met Mary Day, daughter of a Macon jeweler, originally from the North but now loyal to the Southern cause. Miss Day had studied music in New York, and Lanier naturally found her congenial, though he continued for a time to court and serenade other young ladies. Back in camp, he helped to pass the time by translating German poems and composing verses of his own. Though he continued his music for recreation, he was now thinking of poetry as his major vocation. To his father he wrote a surprisingly acute analysis of his own defects as a poet:

I have frequently noticed in myself a tendency to a diffuse style; a disposition to push my metaphors too far, employing a multitude of words to heighten the patness of the image and so making it a *conceit* rather than a metaphor, a fault copiously illustrated in the poetry of Cowley, Waller, Donne, and others of that ilk.

In 1865 Lanier was transferred from the Signal Service to blockade running and was captured on November 2. Just before the vessel was surrendered, the Captain tried to persuade him to don an English

officer's uniform in order to avoid imprisonment, but Lanier refused to disguise himself. He was sent to Point Lookout, Maryland, a horror hole comparable to the worst Confederate prisons, and there he nearly died of hunger, exposure, and disease. Almost the only cheer in the prison was this gallant soldier's wonderful flute music. Father Tabb, who was in the prison, heard it and became the musician's lifelong friend. Finally, almost more dead than alive, he was released and on March 15, 1865, stumbled into Macon. In April Macon surrendered to the Union army, and the war was over. But from the effects of his exhaustion in military service and his illness in prison Lanier never entirely recovered.

After partially regaining his health, Sidney Lanier now began the long, discouraging struggle against poverty. In September he became a tutor on a plantation nine miles from Macon, but in a short time he was forced to resign on account of his health, and his physician advised his going to Mobile Bay. He seems to have inherited a constitutional weakness for tuberculosis of the lungs, and this disease was now his chief enemy. In January he felt strong enough to assume the light duties of clerk at the Lanier-owned Exchange Hotel in Montgomery, Alabama, where Clifford was then employed. There the two brothers worked on their novels, Clifford on *Thorn-fruit* and Sidney on *Tiger-Lilies*. These black days of "Reconstruction" were especially discouraging to a man whose great ambition was to produce literature. To a college friend who had gone North, Sidney Lanier wrote, "There's not enough attrition of mind on mind, here, to bring out any sparks from a man." But he succeeded in publishing a few poems in one of the better New York magazines, the *Round Table*. In the spring of 1867 he resigned his position, and after a brief rest in Macon, went to New York to arrange for publication of *Tiger-Lilies*. It was finally published by one of the leading firms, Hurd and Houghton, but at least partly at the author's expense—or rather that of his wealthy cousin in the city, Mr. J. F. D. Lanier.

Sidney Lanier himself soon outgrew *Tiger-Lilies*, branding it in 1869 as "a foolish book of a foolish boy." As a work of art it is, indeed, silly, but it is important in the understanding of Lanier's mental development. It begins with an allegorical preface, and the first book is excessively "romantic" in the Novalis-Richter vein of the German Romantic tradition, the author's obvious source. The story tells of friendship at first sight, of a beautiful German maiden who had fled to the Smoky Mountains (with a maid and plenty of money) after her seduction by

an American in Germany, of a duel at a masquerade ball between her former and her present lover, of an Indian lover who guards her like a good angel, and of other improbable things. The best part of the romance is the second half, based at least to some extent on the author's own war experiences. Even here the literary allusion and quotation is excessive, the atmosphere is heavy with chivalry, the humorous adventures are derived from the picaresque novel, and the style is quaintly "poetic," abounding in Elizabethan conceits, puns, and florid metaphor. The only half-way convincing character is a mountaineer who speaks in untutored dialect. The other characters are mere personifications, but the main themes of the book are Beauty and Love, and the two are joined by music, for the novel ends with the transcendental conclusion that "music means harmony, harmony means love, and love means—God!"

Most Southern reviewers of *Tiger-Lilies* were highly laudatory, though the book won Lanier no money and little fame. There seemed small prospect of his earning a living with his pen. Consequently, he turned to teaching, becoming principal of an academy at Prattville, Alabama, toward the close of 1867. In December he married Mary Day, after a four-year courtship. The following month he suffered his first hemorrhage of the lungs, and in May the school closed because most parents of the students could not pay the tuition. These were truly "The Raven Days" both for the poet and the defeated Confederacy.

O Raven Days, dark Raven Days of sorrow,
Will ever any warm light come again?
Will ever the lit mountains of To-morrow
Begin to gleam across the mournful plain?

But no matter how discouraging the outlook, Lanier never gave way to despair. Even in 1868 he could dream of making his life itself a song.

His song was only living aloud,
His work a singing with his hand!

With no prospects of gaining a livelihood by poetry, music, or teaching, Lanier resigned himself to studying law in his father's office, and for five years he stuck doggedly to the legal profession. He continued, however, to write a few poems. "Nirvâna" (fall of 1869) expresses his resignation. Two years later we find him writing dialect poems, humorous in language, serious in the purpose of teaching the South how to meet its economic problems. But the hemorrhages returned, and Lanier was advised to spend the winter of 1872-73 in Texas. The most devoted husband and father imaginable, he was almost unbearably homesick and began in Texas, perhaps for the

first time, to realize the hopelessness of his struggle. To his wife he wrote, "Ineffable poems—of music and words—torment me" And on January 10, 1873, "I have not yet dealt so much as a good sword-stroke in life" But he was not idle He spent hours with Chaucer and Shakespeare, and under their influence began to devalue his two early favorites, Morris and Tennyson He also took an interest in the life and history of Texas and wrote some "Letters from Texas" for the *New York World* (which earned him a mere pittance) and a long essay, published in the *Southern Magazine*, on "San Antonio de Bexar" Lanier's health improved in Texas, and possibly he might have been cured if he had remained, but with returning health came reviving ambition

In September, 1873, Lanier went again to New York, seeking a market both for his literary productions and his music, but his hopes now rested especially on his music He heard Theodore Thomas' concerts in Central Park Garden and hoped to secure a position as flutist in Thomas' orchestra, the most famous at that time in America, but failed even to meet the director On his way to New York he had stopped in Baltimore, where Asger Hamerik was organizing the Peabody Orchestra Lanier was offered a position with this orchestra as first flutist for sixty dollars a month. He played with the Peabody for several seasons, returning each spring to his family in Georgia, being unable to support his wife and children in Baltimore. During these years he found time to experiment with composition, his most successful and characteristic efforts being the tone poems for flute solo, "Black-Birds" and "Swamp-Robin" As Philip Graham says in his study of Lanier's musical compositions, "he sought to turn his music into poetry exactly as he tried to make his verse into music"

During the summer of 1874 at Griffin, Georgia, Lanier became interested in the cultivation of corn in the South instead of the soil-exhausting and price-fluctuating cotton and began the composition of his first major poem, "Corn." For the form he used the Cowleyan ode, with his own experimental tone-poem diction, but he aimed to create not merely pleasing sounds and images but also to criticize the agrarian economy of the South. His economics were sound and his diction lyrical, but their incongruity is likely to jar on the modern ear. The *Atlantic Monthly* and *Scribner's Magazine* rejected the poem but *Lippincott's* published it in February, 1875. Gibson Peacock, editor of the *Baltimore Evening Bulletin*, liked it so much that he launched a campaign for the poet and became his steadfast friend Through Peacock,

Lanier also became acquainted with the actress Charlotte Cushman and the *literati* of Baltimore.

During the following spring Lanier wrote his most ambitious poem, "The Symphony" Again we find the tone poem and the didactic message combined The poet attempts to imitate the sounds of the various instruments and then to combine them in orchestral effects He was contemplating the theme as early as 1868 in the uncompleted novel in verse, "The *Jacquerie*," to be derived from Froissart and Michelet, perhaps the latter influencing him to take the side of the people and the former arousing his chivalric sympathy In the fourteenth century, Lanier declared, "Trade arose & overthrew Chivalry," but "it is now the *gentlemen* who must arise & overthrow Trade." The idea of a modern chivalry had always appealed to the romantic and religious Lanier. In 1865 he asserted "The days of chivalry are not gone, they are only spiritualized. . . In these times, the knight of the nineteenth century fights, not with the trenchant sword, but with the trenchant soul"

By "Trade" Lanier meant such effects of industrialism as he had observed in West Virginia rolling-mills with the "blaring furnaces" where the sweating men labored "with only enough time betwixt tasks to eat in and sleep in,—far too little to wash in!", and the contrast in Baltimore between the prosperous merchants and "the all-wanting, anything-grasping folk who are rogues by birth and by necessity and who suffer, suffer, throughout life." Lanier's hatred of trade, therefore, is not so much aristocratic scorn of tradesmen as Christian sympathy for the oppressed Professor Anderson says, "As in the earlier [*i.e.*, "The *Jacquerie*"] so in the later poem the evil effects of trade were to be overcome not by economic reforms but by chivalry, in the most idealistic Christian interpretation of that code of unselfish service."

And ever to solve the discords true—
Love alone can do

Feeling that music symbolizes the generous heart of God and the immortal longings of the Soul (Lanier's deepest conviction), he ends "Trade" with the cryptic line:

Music is Love in search of a word.

Early in 1875 the president of the Atlantic Coast Line Railway employed the rising poet to write a guidebook to Florida. Lanier eagerly accepted the assignment because it would pay him a living salary for three months, and in the spring he left for Georgia and Florida to gather material The book was published in the fall by Lippincott under the title

Florida Its Scenery, and History In a final chapter Lanier recommended the climate of Georgia and Florida "for consumptives," but he could not afford to stay long enough to prove its curative value for himself With all his conscientious effort, *Florida* remained hack work but it did his growing reputation no harm He met Bayard Taylor and other New York *literati*, and Miss Cushman invited him to Boston, where he met Longfellow and Lowell During the winter of 1875-76 he played, as usual, with the Peabody Orchestra

The new year brought the beginning of Lanier's harvest, both the good crop and the bad in literature he began to receive heart warming recognition, but continued exertion beyond his strength brought failing health and a foreshadow of the inevitable end First, he was commissioned, through the recommendation of Bayard Taylor, to write a cantata for the Philadelphia Centennial He completed it in January, Dudley Buck delightedly set it to music, and the performance was given in May Against Lanier's wishes the words were published without the music, and though some critics liked it, others found the diction obscure and even unintelligible, and there was a considerable newspaper controversy, which hurt the poet more than he would admit to his friends but at least made his name familiar to the nation During the spring he published another piece of hack-work, "Sketches of India," in *Lippincott's* Then in the summer the overwork and excitement took its toll He became dangerously ill "Clover" reflects the near-despair to which he was reduced In November Lippincott and Company printed an edition of ten of his poems which had received magazine publication, and "Corn" and "The Symphony" were widely praised by the critics But Lanier was in no condition to enjoy his triumphs In December he went to Tampa to recuperate

With a new, if temporary, lease on life Lanier returned North the following summer, seeking employment from June to September in Baltimore Washington, New York, and Philadelphia, finally resigning himself, as usual, to engagement for another season with the Peabody Orchestra In October he was at last able to move his family to Baltimore, and for the moment the outlook seemed brighter During the next four years, with his health even more precarious than before, he managed to turn out a prodigious amount of work, most of it experimental and more promising than actually successful, but much of it valuable pioneering To take the least important first, he edited juvenile versions of Froissart, King Arthur, the *Mabinogion*, and Percy He continued to

play with the orchestra and sometimes to give private concerts In "The Marshes of Glynn" he demonstrated his genius for religious poetry Here and in his short lyrics, not in his economic tone poems, we find the best of Lanier the poet

But Lanier was also working feverishly in several other—but related—fields, as if stimulated by a premonition of his early death In the spring of 1878 he began lecturing on literature at the Peabody Institute, and the following year was employed by President D C Gilman of the newly established Johns Hopkins University to give public lectures, the first series being on Shakespeare, the second on Chaucer and Shakespeare, and the final one on the "English Novel" These lectures were given outside the regular curriculum, resembling what would later be called adult education courses

Even before his appointment at Hopkins, Lanier was studying and writing on "The Physics of Poetry" and had already planned a book on prosody In 1880 he managed to finish his *Science of English Verse*, a book in which he attempted to reconcile the laws of poetry and music and to establish a theory of prosody on a scientific basis Later prosodists have usually agreed that he did not entirely succeed, but he made a positive contribution even by his attempt, and if he had lived to revise his book, his achievement might have been greater Only by the utmost exertion of his strong will could he get through his lectures on the English Novel In the spring of 1881 he fled hastily to the mountains of North Carolina, which had become a famous resort for consumptives, but the end could be postponed only a few months It came on September 7, near Tryon

Since most of Lanier's literary criticism was not published until after his death, it is appropriate to make a posthumous summary of his theories His poetic doctrine is to be found mainly in *Music and Poetry* (1898), *Retrospects and Prospects* (1899), *Shakespeare and His Forerunners* (1908), and here and there in *The English Novel* (1883) The foundation of his poetics is his attitude toward music To him music is the finest of all the arts, being freest "from the weight and burden of realism," and is the means by which "man relates himself to the infinite" He calls upon music to lead him out of "this labyrinth of the real, the definite, the known, into the region of the ideal, the infinite, the unknown" But the "mission of music is not merely to be a quietus and lullaby to the soul of a time that is restless with science" It is not so much an "escape" as a means of carrying "our emotion toward the Infinite" Poetry can accomplish this end

less successfully than music, but the more musical—and "ideal"—the poetry, the more nearly it can produce the divine rapture of true music

This theory of music led Lanier to regard the relation of prose to verse as "not the relation of the formless to the formal" but "the relation of more forms to fewer forms" His own poetry is sufficient proof that he did not wish to preserve conventional formalism, though he regarded form as the essence of poetic merit In fact, he elevates Form to a philosophical plane:

. . . Science is the knowledge of these forms . . . Art is the creation of beautiful forms . . . Religion is the faith in the infinite Form-giver . . . Life is the control of all these forms to the satisfaction of our human needs.

The form of art, therefore, is moral as well as aesthetic, and it is not surprising that in his specific judgments he makes morality the touchstone of greatness

. . . I think it clearly demonstrable that in all . . . [the profligate] artists there was a failure in the artistic sense precisely to the extent of the failure in apprehending those enormous laws of nature whose practical execution by the individual we call morality You can always see where the half-way good man was but the half-way artist.

These theories sometimes led Lanier into erratic judgments. Despite the fact that he liked the sanity and vigor of *Leaves of Grass*, he felt compelled to condemn the work as poetry because he did not recognize a form in Whitman's apparent formlessness And in his lectures on the novel, he placed George Eliot ahead of all other novelists because of her conception of Love as the organic idea of moral order, and he admired Bulwer-Lytton because his "gentleman is always given as a very manful and Christian being" On the other hand, he could read none of the novels of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne "without feeling as if my soul had been in the rain, draggled, muddy, miserable" He even compared their works to gunpowder, nitroglycerine, and poison, and confessed that "if I had my way with these classic books I would blot them from the face of the earth." And it is not surprising that the editor who expurgated Malory for schoolboys could not stomach Zola and "naturalism." But his high conception of the functions of the artist, and his insistence on judging the work in its relation to life, still give his critical theory a universality and importance that cannot be denied His theory is important also to the student, for we find in it both the limitations and the strength of Sidney Lanier as a literary master.

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(Also see Staiké, below)

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FROM

*Tiger Lilies*¹

BOOK II

CHAPTER I²

Thou shalt not kill
 Love your enemies
 Father, forgive them they know not what they do
CHRIST

The early spring of 1861 brought to bloom, besides innumerable violets and jessamines, a strange, enormous, and terrible flower

This was the blood red flower of war, which grows amid thunders, a flower whose freshening dews are blood and hot tears, whose shadow chills a land, whose odors strangle a people, whose giant petals droop downward, and whose roots are in hell

It is a species of the great genus, sin-flower, which is so conspicuous in the flora of all ages and all countries, and whose multifarious leafage and fruitage so far overgrew a land that the violet, or love-genus has often small chance to show its quiet blue

The cultivation of this plant is an expensive business, and it is a wonder, from this fact alone, that there should be so many fanciers of it. A most profuse and perpetual manuring with human bones is absolutely necessary to keep it alive, and it is well to have these powdered, which can be easily done by hoofs of cavalry-horses and artillery-wheels, not to speak of the usual method of mashing with cannon-balls. It will not grow, either, except in some wet place near a stream of human blood, and you must be active in collecting your widows' tears and orphans' tears and mothers' tears to freshen the petals with in the mornings

It requires assiduous working, and your labor-hire will be a large item in the expense, not to speak of the amount disbursed in preserving the human bones alive until such time as they may be needed, for, I forgot to mention, they must be fresh, and young, and newly-killed

¹ *Tiger-Lilies: A Novel* by Sidney Lanier, New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867 (See introductory essay on Lanier, above)

² Garland Greever, editor of this novel in the Centennial Edition of Lanier's complete *Works* (Baltimore 1945 vol. V), reports that in the MS. version of this and the following chapter are several references to contemporary persons and events which Lanier suppressed in the printed novel, p. 93

It is, however, a hardy plant, and may be grown in any climate, from snowy Moscow to hot India

It blooms usually in the spring, continuing to flower all summer until the winter rains set in yet in some instances it has been known to remain in full bloom during a whole inclement winter, as was shown in a fine specimen which I saw the other day, grown in North America by two wealthy landed proprietors, who combined all their resources of money, of blood, of bones, of tears, of sulphur and what not, to make this the grandest specimen of modern horticulture, and whose success was evidenced by the pertinacious blossoms which the plant sent forth even amid the hostile rigors of snow and ice and furious storms. It is supposed by some that seed of this American specimen (now dead) yet remain in the land, but as for this author (who, with many friends, suffered from the unhealthy odors of the plant), he could find it in his heart to wish fervently that these seed, if there be verily any, might perish in the germ, utterly out of sight and life and memory and out of the remote hope of resurrection, forever and ever, no matter in whose granary they are cherished!

But, to return

It is a spreading plant, like the banyan, and continues to insert new branch-roots into the ground, so as sometimes to overspread a whole continent. Its black-shadowed jungles afford fine cover for such wild beasts as frauds and corruptions and thefts to make their lair in, from which, often, these issue with ravening teeth and prey upon the very folk that have planted and tended and raised their flowery homes!

Now, from time to time, there have appeared certain individuals (wishing, it may be, to disseminate and make profit upon other descriptions of plants) who have protested against the use of this war-flower.

Its users, many of whom are surely excellent men, contend that they grow it to protect themselves from oppressive hailstorms, which destroy their houses and

40 crops

But some say the plant itself is worse than any hailstorm, that its shades are damp and its odors unhealthy, and that it spreads so rapidly as to kill out and uproot all corn and wheat and cotton crops

Which the plant-users admit, but rejoin that it is cowardly to allow hailstorms to fall with impunity, and that manhood demands a struggle against them of some sort.

But the others reply, fortitude is more manly than bravery, for noble and long endurance wins the shining love of God, whereas brilliant bravery is momentary, is easy to the enthusiastic, and only dazzles the admiration of the weak-eyed since it is as often shown on one side as the other

But then, lastly, the good war-flower cultivators say, our preachers recommend the use of this plant, and help us mightily to raise it in resistance to the hailstorms

And reply, lastly, the interested other-flower men, that the preachers should preach Christ, that Christ was worse hailed upon than anybody, before or since; that he always refused to protect himself, though fully able to do it, by any war-banyan, and that he did, upon all occasions, not only discourage the resort to this measure, but did inveigh against it more earnestly than any thing else, as the highest and heaviest crime against Love—the Father of Adam, Christ, and all of us

Friends and horticulturists, cry these men, stickling for the last word, if war was ever right, then Christ was always wrong, and war-flowers and the vine of Christ grow different ways, insomuch that no man may grow with both!

CHAPTER II

King Henry.—How now, good Blunt? Thy looks are full of speed.

Blunt.—So hath the business that I come to speak of. Lord Mortimer of Scotland hath sent word That Douglas and the English rebels met, The eleventh of this month, at Shrewsbury: A mighty and a fearful head they are, If promises be kept on every hand, As ever offered foul play in a state

KING HENRY IV [PART I]

But these sentiments, even if anybody could have been found patient enough to listen to them, would have been called sentimentalities, or worse, in the spring of 1861, by the inhabitants of any of those States lying between Maryland and Mexico. An afflatus of war was breathed upon us. Like a great wind, it drew on and blew upon men, women, and children. Its sound mingled with the solemnity of the church-organs and arose with the earnest words of preachers

praying for guidance in the matter. It sighed in the half-breathed words of sweethearts conditioning impatient lovers with war-services. It thundered splendidly in the impassioned appeals of orators to the people. It whistled through the streets, it stole in to the firesides, it clinked glasses in bar-rooms, it lifted the gray hairs of our wise men in conventions, it thrilled through the lectures in college halls, it rustled the thumbed book-leaves of the school-rooms.

10 This wind blew upon all the vanes of all the churches of the country, and turned them one way—toward war. It blew and shook out, as if by magic, a flag whose device was unknown to soldier or sailor before, but whose every flap and flutter made the blood bound in our veins

Who could have resisted the fair anticipations which the new war-idea brought? It arrayed the sanctity of a righteous cause in the brilliant trappings of military display, pleasing, so, the devout and the flippant which in various proportions are mixed elements in all men. It challenged the patriotism of the sober citizen, while it inflamed the dream of the statesman, ambitious for his country or for himself. It offered test to all allegiances and loyalties, of church of state; of private loves, of public devotion; of personal consanguinity, of social ties. To obscurity it held out eminence, to poverty, wealth; to greed, a gorged maw, to speculation, legalized gambling; to patriotism, a country; to statesmanship, a government; to virtue, purity; and to love, what all love
30 most desires—a field wherein to assert itself by action.

The author devoutly wishes that some one else had said what is here to be spoken—and said it better. That is: if there was guilt in any, there was guilt in nigh all of us, between Maryland and Mexico; that Mr. Davis, if he be termed the ringleader of the rebellion, was so not by virtue of any instigating act of his, but purely by the unanimous will and appointment of the Southern people; and that the
40 hearts of the Southern people bleed to see how their own act has resulted in the chaining of Mr. Davis, who was as innocent as they, and in the pardon of those who were as guilty as he!

All of us, if any of us, either for pardon or for punishment: this is fair, and we are willing.

But the author has nought to do with politics; and he turns with a pleasure which he hopes is shared by the Twenty-four-thousand-nine-hundred-

and ninety nine, to pursue the adventures of Paul Rubetsahl and company in

CHAPTER III

Prince Henry—I have procured thee, Jack, a charge of foot

Falstaff—I would it had been of horse Well, God be thanked for these rebels

KING HENRY IV [PART I]

On one of the last days of April, '64, six soldiers in gray, upon six horses in all colors, were riding down the road that leads from Surrey³ Court House toward the beautiful bay into which the James spreads itself before it is called Hampton Roads

It was yet early in the morning The sun was rejoicing with a majestic tenderness over his little firstling—April

Our six horsemen were in gay conversation, as who would not be, with a light rifle on his shoulder, with a good horse bounding along under him, with a fresh breeze that had in it the vigor of the salt sea and the caressing sweetness of the spring blowing upon him, with five friends tried in the tempest of war as well as by the sterner test of the calm association of inactive camp life, and with the world's width about him and the enchanting vagueness of life yet to be lived—the delicious change-prospect of futurity—before him?

As they rode on, the beauty of the woods grew, 30 nearing the river The road wound about deep glens filled with ancient beeches and oaks, and carpeted with early flowers and heart-leaves upon which still dwelt large bulbs of dew, so enchanted with their night's resting-place that they slept late, loth to expand into vapor and go back home in the clouds

Lieutenant Flemington spurred his horse forward and turned him round full face to the party

"Gentlemen, there's some mistake about all this!" said he, as the men stopped, laughing at a puzzled 40 expression which overspread his face "for whereas, this honorable company of six has been for three years or more toilsomely marching on foot with an infantry regiment—but now rides good horses and whereas, this honorable company of six has been for three years feeding upon hard-tack and bacon which grew continually harder and also less and wormier—but now devours Virginia biscuit and spring-chickens

³ Should be 'Surrey

and ham and eggs—and all the other things that came on, and went off, the table at mine host's of the Court House this morning"—

"Not to speak of the mint juleps that the big man-slave brought in on a waiter before we got o' bed," interposed Briggs

"And whereas, we have hitherto had to fight through a press of from two to five hundred men to fill our canteens when we marched by a well— 50 but now do take our several gentlemanly ease and leisure in doing that same, as just now when the pretty girls smiled at us in the big white house yonder, where we

Went to the well to get some water ⁴

and whereas, we have hitherto dragged along in pantaloons that we could put on a dozen ways by as many holes, have worn coats that afforded no protection to anything but the insects congregated in the seams of the same, have had shirts that—shirts that—that—at any rate we have had shirts—but now do fare forth pranked in all manner of gorgeous array such as gray jackets with fillimagrec on the sleeves of 'em, and hussar-breeches, and cavalry-boots, and O shade of Jones of Georgia!⁵ with spurs to boot and clean white collars to neck and whereas, we have been accustomed to think a mud-hole a luxury in the way of beds, and have been wont to beg Heaven, as its greatest boon to man, not to let the cavalry ride over us without waking us up to see 'em do it—but now do sleep between white sheets without fear of aught but losing our senses from sleeping so intensely and whereas, finally, all these things are contrary to the ordinary course of nature and are not known save as dim recollections of a previous state of existence in itself extremely hypothetical, therefore, be it resolved and it is hereby resolved"—

"Unanimously," from the five

"That this—figure—at present on his horse and clothed with these sumptuous paraphernalia of pompous war, is *not* B Chauncey Flemington, that is to say (to borrow a term from the German metaphysics) is Not-Me, that this horse is not *my* horse, this paraphernalia not *my* paraphernalia, that para-ditto not *your* para-ditto, that this road is *no* road, and the whole affair a dream of phantasmagory sent of the

⁴ From a nursery rhyme

⁵ Burlesque hero of *Major Jones's Courtship* by William Tappan Thompson [Garland Greever's note]

Devil for no purpose but to embitter the waking from it, and

"Resolved, further, that we now proceed to wake up, and exorcise this devil Cain Smallin, of the bony fingers, will you do me the favor to seize hold of my left ear and twist it? Hard, if you please, Mr. Smallin!"

Cain seized and twisted whereat went up a villainous screech from the twissee.

"Mark you, men, how hard the Devil clings to¹⁰ him!" quoth Briggs

"Herr von Hardenberg says, 'when we dream that we dream, we are near waking,'"⁶ said Rubetsahl, "but I am not awake and I surely dream that I do dream!"

"I remember," said Aubrey, "that Hans Dietrich did dream, upon a time, that the elf-people showed gold upon him, but awoke in the morning and found his breeches-pockets full of yellow leaves. *A fortiori*,⁷ this in my canteen, which I dimly dream²⁰ was poured in there for home-made wine by an old lady who stopped me and blessed me the other side the Court House this morning—this, I say, in my canteen, should now be no wine, or at least, if these present events be a dream, should be sour wine⁸ I will resolve me of this doubt!"

The canteen rose in air, its round mouth met Aubrey's round mouth, and a gurgling noise was heard, what time the five awaited in breathless suspense the result of the experiment. The gurgling con-³⁰tinued.

"I think Mister Aubrey must ha' fell into another dream, like," quoth Cain Smallin, "an's done forgot he's drinkin', an' the rest of us is dry!"

"Ah-h-h-h!" observed Aubrey as the canteen at last came down 'Gentlemen, this is as marvellous like to good wine of the blackberry as is one blue-coat to another. Albeit this be but a thin and harmful wine of hallucination, yet—I am a mortal man! at least I dream I am, wherefore I am fain exclaim with the⁴⁰ poet

Thus let me dream, forever, on!

"I think," modestly interposed Philip Sterling, "that I might perhaps throw a little light on the subject, at any rate, the number of experiments will

increase the probability of our conclusions drawn therefrom. Now, as I passed down the road, in this dream, I observed a still where they make apple-brandy, and propounding some questions as to the *modus agendi* to a benevolent-looking lady who stood in the house hard by. she, if I dream not, begged that I would accept this bottle, which I now uncork, I think, and which, if all end well, will enable me to say, in the words of the song,

I see her still in my dreams

But if it should be wild-wine of the Devil, or newt's-eye and frog-toe porridge, or other noxious *ngote* of hags and witches—stand around to receive me as I fall I waive the politeness which requires I should offer this bottle first to my fellow-dreamers here, Mr Briggs and Mr Smallin, in consideration that the compound might kill, and I were loth the country should lose two such valuable lives. I request that I be decently buried and news sent home, if it prove fatal, as I fear. I drink! Friends, adieu, adieu!"

"Why, this," quoth Briggs, "is surely much adieu about nothing!"

The bottle went up to the mouth, like its friend the canteen, and stayed, like its friend. While it hung in mid-air—

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Aubrey, "the poison is taking effect! He has not strength to remove it from his mouth!"

"Gentlemen, all is over!" said Rubetsahl, and groaned, and, seizing Philip, dragged him to the green bank of the road, when the dragee fell back in true stage-fashion, not forgetting to spread his handkerchief upon the hillock where he laid his dying head. "I would not die," muttered he, "with my hair full of cockle-burrs!"

"Danged ef this 'ere ham ain't mighty nigh as good as fresh ven'zun!" quoth sturdy Cain Smallin, who had dismounted and seated himself on a stump, while his lower jaw worked like a trip-hammer reversed, to the great detriment of a huge slice of bread and ham which he had produced from his capacious haversack. "Peas like as if I never was so horny sence I was froze up over on old Smoky Mount'n, one Christmas. I b'leeve I han't don nuthin' but eat sence we was detailed f'om the *regiment*, t'other side o' Richmond! You better b'leeve now—Gentlemen!" he exclaimed suddenly, "look at yan nigger down the road! He travels as peert as ef he was a-carryin'

⁶ Quoted by Carlyle in his essay on Novalis.

⁷ Furthermore—more strongly.

⁸ Because it is enchanted.

orders to a *regiment* to come down into the fight double quick Hornet must ha' stung his mule, or sumthin'!"

At this moment a negro dashed up on a mule whose pace he was accelerating with lusty encouragement of switch, foot, and voice

"Halt there, *caballero* hot with haste and coal-black with speed!" cried Flemington "What's the matter?"

"Good God, Marster, de Yankee niggers is playin' 10 de devil wid old Mistis down de road yonder! Dey done hung old Marster up to a tree limb to make him tell whah he put de las' year's brandy an' he nuvver tole 'em, an' I seed 'em a histe in him up agin, an' I run roun' to de stable an' tuk out ole Becky here an' cum a-stavin', an' I 'lowed to mysef I'd save one mule for ole Marster anyhow ef he lives, which I don't b'leeve he's a gwine to do it nohow, an—"

"Mount, men!" Flemington jumped into the sad 20 dle "How far is it to the house? What's your name?" —to the negro

"Name Charles, sah, Charles, de ca'ige-driver Hit's about a half ur three-quarter thar, f'om here"

"Have they got out a picket, did you see any of them ridin' this way while the others were in the house?"

"Yaas, sah, seed one cumin' dis ways as I cum de back-way, out o' de lot!"

"'Twon't do to ride any further, then Get off 30 your mule, Charles Boys, dismount and tie your horses in the bushes here, off the road We'll go round this back-way Lead the way, and keep under cover of the hedge and the fence, yonder, everybody, so they can't see us"

While the words were being spoken the command had been executed, and the party struck into a rapid walk down a path which led off from the road in the direction of the river Presently they crossed a fence, and stopped to peep through the rails of an- 40 other, running perpendicularly to the path A large house, part brick, part wooden, embowered in trees, appeared at a short distance

"Dat's de place!" whispered Charles, the carriage-driver

Flemington had already formed his plans

"Men, they're all inside the house, except the picket out in the road yonder I'm going to creep up close to the house just behind that brick garden-

wall there, and see how things look The rest of you keep down this side o' the fence, and get just behind the long cattle stable in rear of the house Wait there till you hear me shoot, then dash up to the house,—'t isn't twenty yards—and every man for himself! Come with a yell or two Cain, you come with me Here goes over the fence quick!"

The minutes and the men crept on, like silent worms Flemington and Smallin gained their wall, which ran within a few feet of the house, unperceived

"I'll stop here, Cain You creep on, close down, old fellow, until you get to the front fence yonder, and wait there till I shoot Then come on like a big rock tumbling down Old Smoky!"

Under cover of a thick vine which ran along the top of the wall, Flemington cautiously raised his head and peeped over

An old man was lying on the grass plat, with a rope-noose still hanging round his neck Over him bent a young girl She was dashing water in his face and chafing his hands in the endeavor to restore the life which, by his bloodless face and the blue streak under his eyes, seemed to have taken its departure forever Near them sat a corpulent old lady, on the ground, passive with grief, rocking herself to and fro, in that most pathetic gesture of sorrowing age

Inside the house was Bedlam Oaths, yells of triumph, taunts, and menaces mingled with the crash of breaking crockery and the shuffling of heavy feet

Just as Flemington raised his head above the wall, four stout negroes staggered through a wide door which gave upon a balcony of the second story, bearing a huge old-fashioned wardrobe which they lifted over the railing and let drop A wild shout went up as the wardrobe crashed to the ground and burst open, revealing a miscellaneous mass of garments that are known to the other sex

"Mo' good clo'es!" cried the four, and dived back into the door for new plunder

Through the parlor-window, just opposite Flemington, appeared a burly black, with rolling eyes and grinning mouth, seated at the piano With both fists he banged the keys, while he sang a ribald song at the top of a voice rendered hideously husky by frequent potations from a demijohn that stood on the centre-table Suddenly the performer jumped from his seat

"Damn ef you'll ever play on dat pianner agin, you Becky Parven!" said he, and seized an axe and chopped the instrument in pieces

The raiders—unauthorized ones, as Flemington knew—had evidently found the brandy. They were already infuriated by it. It was with difficulty that Flemington could refrain from firing long enough to allow the rest of the party to gain their position.

Suddenly a huge negro, dressed in the tawdriest of uniforms, which he had just been decorating with 10 all conceivable ornaments tied to whatever button offered a support to dangle from, rushed out of the house towards the group in front, exclaiming,—

"By de livin' God, I'm de Cap'n and I'm gwine to do de kissin' fur de comp'ny! You needn't to shake, old Lady Parven, I'm a'ter dem red lips over yonder!"—pointing to Rebecca Parven

Flemington could withhold no longer. He fired, the black captain fell, an answering yell came from the stable-yard, he leaped the wall and rushed towards 20 the house, meeting Aubrey, who exclaimed hurriedly,—"The rest ran into the back-door, Flem, I ran round for fear they might be too many for you in front, as they came out!"

Almost simultaneously three shots were fired inside the house, and eight or ten negroes in blue uniform rushed through the front door and down the steps. In their ardor Flemington and Aubrey gave no ground. The foremost negro on the steps fell, his companions 30 tumbled over him, the whole mass precipitated itself upon Flemington and Aubrey, and bore them to the earth.

At this moment the black commander, whom Flemington's bullet had merely stunned for a moment, scrambled to his feet, and seeing the other three of Flemington's party running down the steps, called out, "Jump up, boys, de am't but five of 'em, we can whip de lights out'n 'em, yit!" Brandishing his sabre, he ran towards Flemington, who was just rising from the ground

The surprised negroes took heart from the bold tone and action of their commander, and commenced an active scramble for whatever offensive weapons lay about. In the undisciplined haste of plunderers they had thrown down their arms in various places inside the house, the necessity of caution being entirely overwhelmed by the more pressing one of arm-room for the bulky articles which each was piling up for himself. To prevent them from grasping the axes

and farming implements about the yard, besides two or three guns and sabres that had been abandoned by the most eager of the plunderers before entering the house, now required the most active exertions on the part of the Confederates whose number was actually reduced to four, since Flemington was entirely occupied in repelling the savage onslaught of the colored leader

To increase their critical situation, nothing was heard of Cain Smallin, and they could ill afford to lose the great personal strength, not to speak of the yet unfired rifle, of the mountaineer, in a contest where the odds both in numbers and individual power were so much against them

Affairs grew serious. Flemington, for ten minutes, had had arms, legs, and body in unceasing play, to parry with his short unbayoneted carbine the furious cuts of his antagonist. He was growing tired, while his foe, infuriated by brandy and burning for revenge, seemed to gather strength each moment and to redouble his blows. The others were too busy to render any assistance to their lieutenant. John Briggs had just made a close race with three negroes for an axe that lay down the avenue, and was now standing over it endeavoring with desperate whirls of his carbine to defend at once the front, flank, and rear of his position.

Flemington felt his knees giving way, a faint dizziness came over him, and in another moment he would have been cloven from skull to breast-bone, when suddenly John Briggs called out cheerily,—

"Hurrah, boys! Here's help!"

All the combatants stopped to glance towards the gate that opened from the main road into the short avenue leading to the house. True! On the other side of the hedge appeared a cloud of dust, from which sounded the voices of a dozen men,—

"Give the nigs hell, thar, boys!" shouted a bass-voice. "Here we come; hold 'em thar, Flem!" came 40 in treble, as if from a boy-soldier. "You four men on the right, thar, ride round 'em, cut 'em off from the back-yard!" commanded the stentorian voice of Cain Smallin

The tide of victory turned in an instant, and bore off, on its ebb, the colored raiders. Their commander hastily jumped over the garden-wall and made huge strides towards the woods, his followers scattering in flight towards the nearest cover.

Too weak to pursue his frightened opponent,

Flemington sat down to rest, gazing curiously to wards the reinforcing voices

"Open the gate, thar, you men in front!" came from the advancing dust cloud. The gate flew open, in rushed a frightened herd of cows, sheep, horses, mules, hogs, and oxen, in whose midst appeared the tall form of Cain Smallin. Armed with a huge branch of a thorn-tree in each hand, he was darting about amongst the half-wild cattle, belaboring them on all sides, crowding them together and then scattering the mass, what time he poured forth a torrent of inspiring war-cries in all tones of voice, from basso-profundo to boy-soprano. On comes he, like an avalanche with a whirlwind in it, down the avenue, all unconscious of the success of his stratagem, stretching out his long neck over the cows' backs to observe the situation in his front, and not ceasing to dart to and fro, to belabor, and to utter his many-voiced battle cries.

"Gad, he don't see a thing!" exclaimed Briggs, 20 "his eyes are mud-holes of dust and perspiration! He'll run over the old gentleman there, boys! let's get him into the porch", and the four had barely lifted the still unconscious man up the steps when the cattle-cavalry thundered by, splitting at the house like a stream on a rock, and flowing tumultuously each side of it towards the back-yard.

"Hold up, Cain! Hold up, man!" shouted Flemington, "the enemy's whipped and gone!"

Mr Smallin came to a stop in his furious career, 30 and, covered with the dust and sweat of grimy war advanced it a more dignified pace to the steps where his party was resting.

"You see, boys," said he, wiping his face with his coat-sleeve, "I was a right smart time a-comin', but when I did come, I cum, by the Livin'! Phe-e-e-w!" continued he, blowing off his excitement. "Reckin you thought I was a whole brigade, didn't ye? An' I'm blasted ef I didn't make mighty nigh as much rumpus as any common brigade, sure's you're born to die! 40 Ye see, I was creepin' along to'rds the road out yan, an I seed all them critters penned up in a little pen just 'cross the road over against yan gate, an' I 'lowed to myself 'at the niggers had jest marched along the road an' druv along all the cattle in the country for to carry 'em back across the river. An' so I thought if I could git them bulls thar—mighty fine bulls they is, too!—git 'em right mad, an' let the whole kit an' bilin' of 'em in through yan gate down

to'rds the house, I mought skeer somebody mighty bad ef I didn't do nothin' else, an' so I jest lit in amongst 'em thar, an' tickled 'em all right smart with van thorn bushes till they was tolluble mad, an' then fotch 'em through the gate a-bilin'! I've druv cattle afore, gentlemen!" concluded Mr Smallin with a dignity which was also a generosity, since while it asserted his own skill, it at the same time apologized for those who might have attempted such a feat and failed from want of practice in driving cattle.

CHAPTER IV

And if a sigh that speaks regret of happier times appear,
A glimpse of joy that we have met shall shine and dry the
tear

QUOTED BY CHARLES LAMB⁹

In a battle, as far as concerns the individual combatants, the laws and observances of civilization are abandoned, and primitive barbarism is king *pro tem*. To kill as many as possible,—thus, at the actual shock of arms, is the whole duty of man. If indeed there be generals of genius managing the thing behind the lines, it is not less barbarism, but only more powerful barbarism, it is genius manœuvring the interests of brute strength, it is Apollo tending swine.

When the battle is over, to emerge from this temporary barbarism is difficult and requires a little time. Kind Heaven! To see a beautiful woman, to hear her soft tones of voice, to say pleasant things to her, seems so strange, just after you have uttered those strange, hoarse cries that men *do* utter, not knowing why, in battle,—just after you have killed a man, and perhaps felt the sickening warmth of his blood, and turned away from the terrible odor that rises like a curse from the wound. The young men were all moody, and, in spite of their exertions to appear unconstrained, continually relapsed into a half-sullen silence, as they sat at Mrs Parven's elaborate dinner.

Dinner? So They had poured some brandy into the mouth of old Mr Parven, he had recovered, and, though he could not speak, had smiled to the good wife at his bedside to reassure her. Lighter of heart, Mrs Parven had instinctively bent herself to hospitable deeds, had assembled her dusky handmaidens, had bustled up-stairs and down-stairs and in the

⁹ The lines are quoted in Lamb's letter of June 13, 1796, to Coleridge. [Garland Greever's note.]

kitchen, had removed the wreck of furniture, had restored order out of chaos, had, in short, issued commands whose multitude made Napoleon's feat of three thousand dispatches in an hour sink into pale insignificance

While they were shaking hands, before mounting to pursue their journey, a mournful tone pervaded the forced liveliness of the young men's congratulations to Mrs. Parven upon the good fate which had brought them up in time to save the house. And even while 10

good Mrs. P was calling out, in her loud, hearty voice, to the scouts, inviting them to ride up frequently and dine with her, she was saying to herself, "God help us! It is but the beginning of the raids, 10 next time, the raiders will be more infuriated, and we may have no friends at hand. God help us!"

And Rebecca, smiling upon Aubrey as he rode away, was moved by those timid apprehensions which love creates in tender hearts, and said to herself, over and over again, "When will I ever see him again?"

*The Symphony*¹¹

"O Trade! O Trade! would thou wert dead!
The Time needs heart—'tis tired of head.
We're all for love," the violins said
"Of what avail the rigorous tale
Of bill for coin and box for bale?
Grant thee, O Trade! thine uttermost hope:
Level red gold with blue sky-slope,
And base it deep as devils grope.
When all's done, what hast thou won
Of the only sweet that's under the sun? 10
Ay, canst thou buy a single sigh
Of true love's least, least ecstasy?"
Then, with a bridegroom's heart-beats trembling,
All the mightier strings assembling
Ranged them on the violins' side
As when the bridegroom leads the bride,
And, heart in voice, together cried:
"Yea, what avail the endless tale
Of gain by cunning and plus by sale?
Look up the land, look down the land 20
The poor, the poor, the poor, they stand
Wedge'd by the pressing of Trade's hand
Against an inward-opening door
That pressure tightens evermore:
They sigh a monstrous foul-air sigh
For the outside leagues of liberty,

Where Art, sweet lark, translates the sky
Into a heavenly melody.
'Each day, all day' (these poor folks say),
'In the same old year-long, drear-long way, 30
We weave in the mills and heave in the kilns,
We sieve mine-meshes under the hills,
And thief much gold from the Devil's bank tills,
To relieve, O God, what manner of ills?—
The beasts, they hunger, and eat, and die;
And so do we, and the world's a sty;
Hush, fellow-swine: why nuzzle and cry?
Swinehood hath no remedy
Say many men, and hasten by,
Clamping the nose and blinking the eye. 40
But who said once, in the lordly tone,
*Man shall not live by bread alone*¹²
But all that cometh from the Throne?
Hath God said so?
But Trade saith No:
And the kilns and the curt-tongued mills say Go:
There's plenty that can, if you can't we know.
Move out, if you think you're underpaid
The poor are prolific, we're not afraid;
Trade is trade.'" 50

Thereat this passionate protesting
Meekly changed, and softened till
It sank to sad requesting
And suggesting sadder still.
"And oh, if men might some time see
How piteous-false the poor decree
That trade no more than trade must be!
Does business mean, *Die, you—live, I?*
Then 'Trade is trade' but sings a lie:
'Tis only war grown miserly. 60

¹⁰ "In the MS the marauding negroes are not soldiers, but runaways under the protection of Federal forces across the James. Further raids are expected from these runaways and from the crews of Federal gunboats in the river." [Garland Greever's note]

¹¹ Published in *Lippincott's Magazine*, June, 1875, revised for *Poems* (1876), present form in *Poems* (1884)

In this composition Lanier discusses economic and moral problems of the day through the personified comments of some of the instruments of a symphony, as follows: strings (lines 18 ff.), flute (86 ff.), clarinet (216 ff.), horn (253 ff.), hautboy (32 ff.)

¹² Luke 14.4

If business is battle, name it so
 War-crimes less will shame it so,
 And widows less will blame it so
 Alas, for the poor to have some part
 In yon sweet living lands of Art,
 Makes problem not for head, but heart
 Vainly might Plato's brain revolve it
 Plainly the heart of a child could solve it "

And then, as when from words that seem but rude
 We pass to silent pain that sits abroad 70
 Back in our heart's great dark and solitude,
 So sank the stings to gentle throbbing
 Of long chords change-marked with sobbing—
 Motherly sobbing, not distinctlier heard
 Than half wing-openings of the sleeping bird,
 Some dream of danger to her young hath stirred
 Then stirring and demurring ceased, and lo!
 Every least ripple of the strings' song flow
 Died to a level with each level bow
 And made a great chord tranquil surfaced so, 80
 As a brook beneath his curving bank doth go
 To linger in the sacred dark and green
 Where many boughs the still pool overlean
 And many leaves make shadow with their sheen
 But presently

A velvet flute-note fell down pleasantly
 Upon the bosom of that harmony,
 And sailed and sailed incessantly,
 As if a petal from a wild-rose blown
 Had fluttered down upon that pool of tone 90
 And boatwise dropped o' the convex side
 And floated down the glassy tide
 And clarified and glorified
 The solemn spaces where the shadows bide
 From the warm concave of that fluted note
 Somewhat, half song, half odor, forth did float,
 As if a rose might somehow be a throat
 "When Nature from her far off glen
 Flutes her soft messages to men,

The flute can say them o'er again, 100
 Yea, Nature, singing sweet and lone,
 Breathes through life's strident polyphone
 The flute-voice in the world of tone

Sweet friends,
 Man's love ascends
 To finer and diviner ends
 Than man's mere thought e'er comprehends
 For I, e'en I,

As here I lie
 A petal on a harmony, 110
 Demand of Science whence and why
 Man's tender pain, man's inward cry,
 When he doth gaze on earth and sky?
 I am not overbold

I hold
 Full powers from Nature manifold
 I speak for each no-tongued tree
 That, spring by spring, doth nobler be,
 And dumbly and most wistfully 120
 His mighty prayerful arms outspreads
 Above men's oft unheeding heads,
 And his big blessing downward sheds
 I speak for all shaped blooms and leaves,
 Lichens on stones and moss on caves,
 Grasses and grains in ranks and sheaves,
 Broad fronded ferns and keen-leaved canes,
 And briery mazes bounding lanes,
 And marsh-plants, thirsty cupped for rains,
 And milky stems and sugary veins, 130
 For every long armed woman vine
 That round a piteous tree doth twine,
 For passionate odors, and divine
 Pistils, and petals crystalline,
 All purities of shady springs,
 All shynesses of film-winged things
 That fly from tree trunks and bark-rings,
 All modesties of mountain fawns
 That leap to covert from wild lawns,
 And tremble if the day but dawns, 140
 All sparklings of small beady eyes
 Of birds, and sidelong glances wise
 Wherewith the jay hints tragedies,
 All piquancies of prickly burs,
 And smoothnesses of downs and furs
 Of eiders and of minevers,
 All limpid honeys that do lie
 At stamen-bases, nor deny
 The humming birds' fine roguery,
 Bee thighs, nor any butterfly, 150
 All gracious curves of slender wings,
 Bark-mottlings, fibre-spiralings,
 Fern wavings and leaf-flickerings,
 Each dial-marked leaf and flower bell
 Wherewith in every lonesome dell
 Time to himself his hours doth tell,
 All tree-sounds, rustlings of pine cones,
 Wind-sighings, doves' melodious moans,

And night's unearthly under-tones;
 All placid lakes and waveless deeps,
 All cool reposing mountain-steeps,
 Vale-calms and tranquil lotos-sleeps,—
 Yea, all fair forms, and sounds, and lights,
 And warmths, and mysteries, and mights,
 Of Nature's utmost depths and heights,
 —These doth my timid tongue present,
 Their mouthpiece and leal instrument
 And servant, all love-eloquent
 I heard, when '*All for love*' the violins cried:
 So, Nature calls through all her system wide,
Give me thy love, O man, so long denied 170
 Much time is run, and man hath changed his ways,
 Since Nature, in the antique fable-days,
 Was hid from man's true love by proxy fays,
 False fauns and rascal gods that stole her praise
 The nymphs, cold creatures of man's colder brain,
 Chilled Nature's streams till man's warm heart
 was fain
 Never to lave its love in them again
 Later, a sweet Voice *Love thy neighbor* ¹³ said,
 Then first the bounds of neighborhood outspread
 Beyond all confines of old ethnic dread 180
 Vainly the Jew might wag his covenant head.
 '*All men are neighbors,*' so the sweet Voice said
 So, when man's arms had circled all man's race,
 The liberal compass of his warm embrace
 Stretched bigger yet in the dark bounds of space;
 With hands a-grope he felt smooth Nature's grace,
 Drew her to breast and kissed her sweetheart face:
 Yea man found neighbors in great hills and trees
 And streams and clouds and suns and birds and
 bees,
 And throbbed with neighbor loves in loving
 these. 190
 But oh, the poor! the poor! the poor!
 That stand by the inward-opening door
 Trade's hand doth tighten ever more,
 And sigh their monstrous foul-air sigh
 For the outside hills of liberty,
 Where Nature spreads her wild blue sky
 For Art to make into melody!
 Thou Trade! thou king of the modern days!
 Change thy ways,
 Change thy ways; 200
 Let the sweaty laborers file
 A little while,

¹³ Cf. Matthew xxii 39.

A little while,
 Where Art and Nature sing and smile.
 Trade! is thy heart all dead, all dead?
 And hast thou nothing but a head?
 I'm all for heart," the flute-voice said,
 And into sudden silence fled,
 Like as a blush that while 'tis red
 Dies to a still, still white instead 210
 Thereto a thrilling calm succeeds,
 Till presently the silence breeds
 A little breeze among the reeds
 That seems to blow by sea-marsh weeds:
 Then from the gentle stir and frct
 Sings out the melting clarionet,
 Like as a lady sings while yet
 Her eyes with salty tears are wet
 "O Trade! O Trade!" the Lady said,
 "I too will wish thee utterly dead 220
 If all thy heart is in thy head
 For O my God! and O my God!
 What shameful ways have women trod
 At beckoning of Trade's golden rod!
 Alas when sighs are traders' lies,
 And heart's-case eyes and violet eyes
 Are merchandise!
 O purchased lips that kiss with pain!
 O cheeks coin-spotted with smirch and stain!
 O trafficked hearts that break in twain! 230
 —And yet what wonder at my sisters' crime?
 So hath Trade withered up Love's sinewy prime,
 Men love not women as in olden time
 Ah, not in these cold merchantable days
 Deem men their life an opal gray, where plays
 The one red Sweet of gracious ladies'-praise.
 Now, comes a suitor with sharp prying eye—
 Says, *Here, you Lady, if you'll sell, I'll buy*
Come, heart for heart—a trade? What! weeping?
 why?
 Shame on such wooers' dapper mercery! 240
 I would my lover kneeling at my feet
 In humble manliness should cry, O *sweet!*
I know not if thy heart my heart will greet:
I ask not if thy love my love can meet:
Whate'er thy worshipful soft tongue shall say,
I'll kiss thine answer, be it yea or nay:
I do but know I love thee, and I pray
To be thy knight until my dying day.
 Woe him that cunning trades in hearts contrives!

Base love good women to base loving drives 250
 If men loved larger, larger were our lives,
 And wooed they nobler, won they nobler wives "

There thrust the bold straightforward horn
 To battle for that lady lorn,
 With heartsome voice of mellow scorn,
 Like any knight in knighthood's morn
 "Now comfort thee," said he,
 "Fair Lady

For God shall right thy grievous wrong,
 And man shall sing thee a true-love song, 260
 Voiced in act his whole life long,
 Yea, all thy sweet life long,
 Fair Lady

Where's he that craftily hath said,
 The day of chivalry is dead?
 I'll prove that lie upon his head,
 Or I will die instead,
 Fair Lady

Is Honor gone into his grave?
 Hath Faith become a carter's knave, 270
 And Selfhood turned into a slave
 To work in Mammon's cave,¹⁴
 Fair Lady?

Will Truth's long blade ne'er gleam again?
 Hath Giant Trade in dungeons slain
 All great contempts of mean-got gain
 And hates of inward stain,
 Fair Lady?

For aye shall name and fame be sold,
 And place be hugged for the sake of gold, 280
 And smirch-robed Justice feebly scold
 At Crime all money-bold,
 Fair Lady?

Shall self-wrapt husbands aye forget
 Kiss-pardons for the daily froc
 Wherewith sweet wifely eyes are wet—
 Blind to lips kiss-wise set—
 Fair Lady?

Shall lovers higgie, heart for heart,
 Till wooing grows a trading mart 290
 Where much for little, and all for part,
 Make love a cheapening art,
 Fair Lady?

Shall woman scorch for a single sin
 That her betrayer may revel in,
 And she be burnt, and he but grin

When that the flames begin,
 Fair Lady?
 Shall ne'er prevail the woman's plea,
 We maids would far, far whiter be 300
 If that our eyes might sometimes see

Men maids in purity,
 Fair Lady?
 Shall Trade aye save his conscience aches
 With jibes at Chivalry's old mistakes—
 The wars that o'erhot knighthood makes
 For Christ's and ladies' sakes,
 Fair Lady?
 Now by each knight that e'er hath prayed
 To fight like a man and love like a maid, 310
 Since Pembroke's life, as Pembroke's blade,¹⁵

I' the scabbard, death, was laid,
 Fair Lady,
 I dare avouch my faith is bright
 That God doth right and God hath might
 Nor time hath changed His hair to white,
 Nor His dear love to spite,
 Fair Lady

I doubt no doubts I strive, and shrive my clay,
 And fight my fight in the patient modern way 320
 For true love and for thee—ah me! and pray
 To be thy knight until my dying day,
 Fair Lady "

Made end that knightly horn, and spurred away
 Into the thick of the melodious fray

And then the hautboy played and smiled,
 And sang like any large eyed child, 280
 Cool-hearted and all undefiled
 "Huge Trade!" he said,
 "Would thou wouldst lift me on thy head 330
 And run where'er my finger led!
 Once said a Man—and wise was He—
 Never shalt thou the heavens see,
 Save as a little child thou be " ¹⁶

Then o'er sea-lashings of commingling tunes
 The ancient wise bassoons,
 Like weird
 Gray-beard
 Old harpers sitting on the high sea-dunes,
 Chanted runes 340
 "Bright-waved gam, gray waved loss,

¹⁵ There were several Earls of Pembroke, but Lanier may have been thinking of William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke (1580-1630), who issued a challenge to all knights and adventurers of hereditary rank in a tournament in 1606

¹⁶ Cf. Matthew xviii 3, Mark x 15

¹⁴ Cf. *Faerie Queene*, II, vii

The sea of all doth lash and toss,
 One wave forward and one across
 But now 'twas trough, now 'tis crest,
 And worst doth foam and flash to best,
 And curst to blest

Life! Life! thou sea-fugue, writ from east to west,
 Love, Love alone can pore
 On thy dissolving score
 Of harsh half-phrasings, 350
 Blotted ere writ,
 And double erasings
 Of chords most fit
 Yea, Love, sole music master blest,
 May read thy weltering palimpsest

To follow Time's dying melodies through,
 And never to lose the old in the new,
 And ever to solve the discords true—

Love alone can do.

And ever Love hears the poor-folks' crying, 360
 And ever Love hears the women's sighing,
 And ever sweet knighthood's death-defying,
 And ever wise childhood's deep implying,
 But never a trader's glozing and lying.

And yet shall Love himself be heard,
 Though long deferred, though long deferred:
 O'er the modern waste a dove hath whirled 17
 Music is Love in search of a word "

1875

1876, 1884

The Stirrup-Cup ¹⁸

Death, thou'rt a cordial old and rare·
 Look how compounded, with what care!
 Time got his wrinkles reaping thee
 Sweet herbs from all antiquity.

David to thy distillage went,
 Keats, and Gotama ¹⁹ excellent,
 Omar Khayyam, and Chaucer bright,
 And Shakspeare for a king-delight

Then, Time, let not a drop be spilt:
 Hand me the cup whene'er thou wilt; 10
 'Tis thy rich stirrup-cup to me,
 I'll drink it down right smilingly
 1877 1877

Song of the Chattahoochee ²⁰

Out of the hills of Habersham,
 Down the valleys of Hall,
 I hurry amain to reach the plain,
 Run the rapid and leap the fall,
 Spl't at the rock and together again,
 Accept my bed, or narrow or wide,
 And flee from folly on every side
 With a lover's pain to attain the plain
 Far from the hills of Habersham,
 Far from the valleys of Hall 10

All down the hills of Habersham,
 All through the valleys of Hall,
 The rushes cried *Abide, abide*,
 The willful waterweeds held me thrall,
 The laving laurel turned my tide,
 The ferns and the fondling grass said *Stay*,
 The dewberry dipped for to work delay,
 And the little reeds sighed *Abide, abide*,
 Here in the hills of Habersham,
 Here in the valleys of Hall 20

¹⁷ Cf. Genesis viii 8-11

¹⁸ A cup of wine taken by a rider about to depart; hence a farewell cup

¹⁹ Gotama, variation of Gautama Buddha

²⁰ Published in the *Independent*, December 20, 1883. The Chattahoochee River flows from Habersham County in north-eastern Georgia into Hall County, and eventually forms the western boundary of the state.

High o'er the hills of Habersham,
 Veiling the valleys of Hall,
 The hickory told me manifold
 Fair tales of shade the poplar tall
 Wrought me her shadowy self to hold,
 The chestnut, the oak, the walnut, the pine,
 Overleaving, with flickering meaning and sign,
 Said, *Pass not, so cold, these manifold*
Deep shades of the hills of Habersham,
These glades in the valleys of Hall

30

And oft in the hills of Habersham,
 And oft in the valleys of Hall,
 The white quartz shone, and the smooth brook-
 stone
 Did bar me of passage with friendly brawl,
 And many a luminous jewel lone

—Crystals clear or a-cloud with mist,
 Ruby, garnet and amethyst—
 Made lures with the lights of streaming stone
 In the clefts of the hills of Habersham,
 In the beds of the valleys of Hall

40

But oh, not the hills of Habersham,
 And oh, not the valleys of Hall
 Avail I am fain for to water the plain
 Downward the voices of Duty call—
 Downward, to toil and be mixed with the main,
 The dry fields burn, and the mills are to turn,
 And a myriad flowers mortally yearn,
 And the lordly main from beyond the plain
 Calls o'er the hills of Habersham,
 Calls through the valleys of Hall

50

1877

1883

The Revenge of Hamish ²¹

It was three slim does and a ten-tined buck in the
 bracken lay,
 And all of a sudden the sinister smell of a man,
 Awaft on a wind-shift, wavered and ran
 Down the hill side and sifted along through the
 bracken and passed that way

Then Nan got a-tremble at nostril she was the
 daintiest doe,
 In the print of her velvet flank on the velvet fern
 She reared, and rounded her ears in turn
 Then the buck leapt up, and his head as a king's
 to a crown did go

Full high in the breeze, and he stood as if Death
 had the form of a deer,
 And the two slim does long lazily stretching
 arose,
 For their day dream slower came to a close,
 Till they woke and were still, breath bound with
 waiting and wonder and fear

10

Then Alan the huntsman sprang over the hillock,
 the hounds shot by,
 The does and the ten tined buck made a mar-
 vellous bound,
 The hounds swept after with never a sound,
 But Alan loud winded his horn in sign that the
 quarry was nigh

For at dawn of that day proud Maclean of
 Lochbuy to the hunt had waved wild,
 And he cursed at old Alan till Alan fared off
 with the hounds
 For to drive him the deer to the lower glen-
 grounds

"I will kill a red deer," quoth Maclean, "in the
 sight of the wife and the child"

20

So gayly he paced with the wife and the child to
 his chosen stand,
 But he hurried tall Hamish the henchman
 ahead "Go turn,"—
 Cried Maclean—"if the deer seek to cross to
 the burn,
 Do thou turn them to me nor fail, lest thy back
 be red as thy hand"

Now hard-fortuned Hamish, half blown of his
 breath with the height of the hill,
 Was white in the face when the ten tined buck
 and the does

²¹ Published in *Appleton's Journal*, November, 1878, based on an incident in William Black's novel, *MacLeod of Dare*, published in *Harper's Magazine* February, 1878. Lanier called the versification an experiment in logædic dactyls, but by conventional scansion the lines are mainly iambic anapestic, as in

And all/ of a sud/den the sin/ister smell/ of a man,
 with an occasional initial trochaic inversion, as in
 Down the/ hill side

The rhythm is striking and original in the handling but less novel than Lanier thought. Similar mixed meters had been used in English poetry since Coleridge.

Drew leaping to burn-ward, huskily rose
His shouts, and his nether lip twitched, and his
legs were o'er-weak for his will

So the deer darted lightly by Hamish and bounded
away to the burn

But Maclean never bating his watch tarried
waiting below

Still Hamish hung heavy with fear for to go
All the space of an hour, then he went, and his
face was greenish and stern,

And his eye sat back in the socket, and shrunken
the eyeballs shone,
As withdrawn from a vision of deeds it were
shame to see.

"Now, now, grim henchman, what is't with
thee?"

Brake Maclean, and his wrath rose red as a beacon
the wind hath upblown

"Three does and a ten-tined buck made out,"
spoke Hamish, full mild,

"And I ran for to turn, but my breath it was
blown, and they passed,

I was weak, for ye called ere I broke me my
fast "

Cried Maclean. "Now a ten-tined buck in the
sight of the wife and the child

I had killed if the gluttonous kern ²² had not
wrought me a snail's own wrong!"

Then he sounded, and down came kinsmen and
clansmen all:

"Ten blows, for ten tine, on his back let fall,
And reckon no stroke if the blood follow not at
the bite of thong!"

So Hamish made bare, and took him his strokes;
at the last he smiled

"Now I'll to the burn," quoth Maclean, "for
it still may be,

If a slimmer-paunched henchman will hurry
with me,

I shall kill me the ten-tined buck for a gift to the
wife and the child!"

Then the clansmen departed, by this path and
that; and over the hill

Sped Maclean with an outward wrath for an
inward shame,

²² A light-armed Celtic foot soldier

And that place of the lashing full quiet became;
And the wife and the child stood sad; and bloody-
backed Hamish sat still

But look! red Hamish has risen; quick about and
about turns he

"There is none betwixt me and the crag-top!"
he screams under breath

Then, livid as Lazarus lately from death,²³
He snatches the child from the mother, and
climbers the crag toward the sea

Now the mother drops breath, she is dumb, and
her heart goes dead for a space,
Till the motherhood, mistress of death, shrieks,
shrieks through the glen,

And that place of the lashing is live with men,
And Maclean, and the gillie ²⁴ that told him, dash
up in a desperate race

Not a breath's time for asking, an eye-glance
reveals all the tale untold

They follow mad Hamish afar up the crag
toward the sea,

And the lady cries. "Clansmen, run for a fee!—
Yon castle and lands to the two first hands that
shall hook him and hold

Fast Hamish back from the brink!"—and ever
she flies up the steep,

And the clansmen pant, and they sweat, and
they jostle and strain

But, mother, 'tis vain; but, father, 'tis vain;
Stern Hamish stands bold on the brink, and
dangles the child o'er the deep

Now a faintness falls on the men that run, and
they all stand still.

And the wife prays Hamish as if he were God,
on her knees,

Crying: "Hamish! O Hamish! but please, but
please

For to spare him!" and Hamish still dangles the
child, with a wavering will.

On a sudden he turns, with a sea-hawk scream,
and a gibe, and a song,

Cries. "So; I will spare ye the child if, in sight
of ye all,

Ten blows on Maclean's bare back shall fall,

²³ Cf John xi.38-44.

²⁴ In the Scottish Highlands a male attendant.

And ye reckon no stroke if the blood follow not at
the bite of the thong!"

Then Maclean he set hardly his tooth to his lip
that his tooth was red,
Breathed short for a space, said "Nav, but it
never shall be!
Let me hurl off the damnable hound in the sea!"
But the wife "Can Hamish go fish us the child
from the sea, if dead?"

80

Say yea!—Let them lash *me*, Hamish?"—"Nay!"
—"Husband, the lashing will heal,
But, oh, who will heal me the bonny sweet
bairn in his grave?
Could ye cure me my heart with the death of
a knave?

Quick! Love! I will bare thee—so—kneel!" Then
Maclean 'gan slowly to kneel

With never a word, till presently downward he
jerked to the earth
Then the henchman—he that smote Hamish—
would tremble and lag,
"Strike, hard!" quoth Hamish, full stern, from
the crag,
Then he struck him, and "One!" sang Hamish,
and danced with the child in his mirth

And no man spake beside Hamish, he counted
each stroke with a song
When the last stroke fell, then he moved him

a pace down the height,
And he held forth the child in the heartaching
sight
Of the mother, and looked all pitiful grave, as
repenting a wrong

And there as the motherly arms stretched out
with the thanksgiving prayer—
And there as the mother crept up with a fearful
swift pace,
Till her finger nigh felt of the bairnie's face—
In a flash fierce Hamish turned round and lifted
the child in the air,

And sprang with the child in his arms from the
horrible height in the sea,
Shrill screeching, "Revenge!" in the wind-rush,
and pallid Maclean,
Age-feeble with anger and impotent pain,
Crawled up on the crag, and lay flat, and locked
hold of dead roots of a tree—

100

And gazed hungrily o'er, and the blood from his
back drip dripped in the brine,
And a sea-hawk flung down a skeleton fish as
he flew,
And the mother stared white on the waste of
blue,
And the wind drove a cloud to seaward, and the
sun began to shine

1878

1878

*Hymns of the Marshes*²⁵

I

Sunrise²⁶

In my sleep I was fain of their fellowship, fain
Of the live-oak, the marsh, and the main
The little green leaves would not let me alone in
my sleep,

²⁵ Lanier planned six hymns on the marshes of Glynn County, on the coast of Georgia near Brunswick, but completed only four. He had known this region for many years, and the poems grew out of intimate knowledge and experience. Each poem was published separately.

²⁶ Published posthumously in the *Independent*, December 14, 1882, reprinted with a few changes in spelling and punctuation in *Poems* (1884)—the text used here. The recent editor, Charles Anderson, has published a new version, with a few but unimportant changes suggested by the manuscript. Lanier is said to have written this poem while he had a temperature of 104 degrees.

Up breathed from the marshes, a message of range
and of sweep,
Interwoven with waftures of wild sea-liberties,
drifting,
Came through the lapped leaves sifting, sifting,
Came to the gates of sleep
Then my thoughts, in the dark of the dungeon-
keep
Of the Castle of Captives hid in the City of
Sleep,

Upstarted, by twos and by threes assembling
The gates of sleep fell a trembling
Like as the lips of a lady that forth falter yes,
Shaken with happiness
The gates of sleep stood wide

10

I have waked, I have come, my beloved! I might
not abide
I have come ere the dawn, O beloved, my live-oaks,
to hide

In your gospelling glooms,—to be
As a lover in heaven, the marsh my marsh and
the sea my sea

Tell me, sweet burly-bark'd man-bodied Tree
That mine arms in the dark are embracing, dost
know

From what fount are these tears at thy feet
which flow?

They rise not from reason, but deeper inconse-
quent deeps

Reason's not one that weeps

What logic of greeting lies

Betwixt dear over-beautiful trees and the rain of
the eyes?

O cunning green leaves, little masters! like as ye
gloss

All the dull-tissued dark with your luminous darks
that emboss

The vague blackness of night into pattern and
plan,

So,

(But would I could know, but would I could
know,)

With your question embroid'ring the dark of the
question of man,—

So, with your silences purfling this silence of man
While his cry to the dead for some knowledge is
under the ban,

Under the ban,—

So, ye have wrought me

Designs on the night of our knowledge,—yea,
ye have taught me,

So,

That haply we know somewhat more than we
know.

Ye lispers, whisperers, singers in storms,
Ye consciences murmuring faiths under
forms,

Ye ministers meet for each passion that
grieves,

Friendly, sisterly, sweetheart leaves,

Oh, rain me down from your darks that contain
me

Wisdoms ye winnow from winds that pain me,—
Sift down tremors of sweet-within-sweet
That advise me of more than they bring,—repeat
Me the woods-smell that swiftly but now brought
breath

From the heaven-side bank of the river of death,—
Teach me the terms of silence,—preach me
The passion of patience,—sift me,—impeach
me,—

And there, oh there

As ye hang with your myriad palms upturned in
the air,

Pray me a myriad prayer

My gossip, the owl,—is it thou

That out of the leaves of the low-hanging bough,

As I pass to the beach, art stirred?

Dumb woods, have ye uttered a bird?

* * *

Reverend Marsh, low-couched along the sea,

Old chemist, rapt in alchemy,

Distilling silence,—lo,

That which our father-age had died to know—

The menstruum that dissolves all matter—thou

Hast found it for this silence, filling now

The globéd clarity of receiving space,

This solves us all man, matter, doubt, disgrace,

Death, love, sin, sanity,

Must in yon silence' clear solution lie.

Too clear! That crystal nothing who'll peruse?

The blackest night could bring us brighter news.

Yet precious qualities of silence haunt

Round these vast margins, ministrant

Oh, if thy soul's at latter gasp for space,

With trying to breathe no bigger than thy race

Just to be fellow'd, when that thou hast found

No man with room. or grace enough of bound

To entertain that New thou tell'st, thou art,—

'Tis here, 'tis here, thou canst unhand thy heart

And breathe it free, and breathe it free,

By rangy marsh, in lone sea-liberty

The tide's at full: the marsh with flooded streams 80

Glimmers, a limpid labyrinth of dreams

Each winding creek in grave entrancement lies

A rhapsody of morning-stars The skies

Shine scant with one forked galaxy,—

The marsh brags ten: looped on his breast they lie.

Oh, what if a sound should be made!
 Oh, what if a bound should be laid
 To this bow and string tension of beauty and
 silence a spring,—
 To the bend of beauty the bow, or the hold of
 silence the string!
 I fear me, I fear me yon dome of diaphanous
 gleam
 Will break as a bubble o'er blown in a dream,—
 Yon dome of too tenuous tissues of space and of
 night,
 Over weighted with stars, over freighted with light,
 Over sated with beauty and silence, will seem
 But a bubble that broke in a dream,
 If a bound of degree to this grace be laid,
 Or a sound or a motion made

But no it is made list! somewhere,—mystery,
 where?

In the leaves? in the air?
 In my heart? is a motion made
 'Tis a motion of dawn, like a flicker of shade on
 shade
 In the leaves 'tis palpable low multitudinous
 stirring
 Upwinds through the woods, the little ones, softly
 conferring,
 Have settled my lord's to be looked for, so, they
 are still,
 But the air and my heart and the earth are
 a thrill,—
 And look where the wild duck sails round the
 bend of the river,—
 And look where a passionate shiver
 Expectant is bending the blades
 Of the marsh grass in serial shimmers and
 shades,—
 And invisible wings, fast fleeting, fast fleeting,
 Are beating
 The dark overhead as my heart beats,—and
 steady and free
 Is the ebb-tide flowing from marsh to sea—
 (Run home, little streams,
 With your lapfuls of stars and dreams),—
 And a sailor unscen is hoisting a peak,
 For list, down the inshore curve of the creek
 How merrily flutters the sail,—
 And lo, in the East! Will the East unveil?
 The East is unveiled, the East hath confessed

A flush 'tis dead, 'tis alive 'tis dead, ere the
 West
 Was aware of it nay, 'tis abiding, 'tis unwith-
 drawn

Have a care, sweet Heaven! 'Tis Dawn

Now a dream of a flame through that dream of a
 flush is up rolled

To the zenith ascending, a dome of undazzling
 Gold
 Is builded, in shape as a bee hive, from out of
 the sea
 The hive is of gold undazzling, but oh, the Bee,
 The star-fed Bee, the build fire Bee,
 Of dazzling gold is the great Sun-Bee
 That shall flash from the hive-hold over the sea

Yet now the dew-drop, now the morning
 gray,

Shall live then little lucid sober day
 Ere with the sun their souls exhale away
 Now in each pettiest personal sphere of dew
 The summ'd morn shines complete as in the blue
 Big dew-drop of all heaven with these lit shrines
 O'er silvered to the farthest sea-confines,
 The sacramental marsh one pious plain
 Of worship lies Peace to the ante-reign
 Of Mary Morning, blissful mother mild,
 Minded of nought but peace, and of a child

Not slower than Majesty moves, for a mean and
 a measure

Of motion,—not faster than dateless Olympian
 leisure

Might pace with unblown ample garments from
 pleasure to pleasure,—

The wave serrate sea rim sinks unjarring, unreeling,
 Forever revealing, revealing, revealing,
 Edgewise, bladewise, halfwise, wholewise,—'tis
 done!

Good-morrow, lord Sun!
 With several voice, with ascription one,
 The woods and the marsh and the sea and my
 soul

Unto thee, whence the glittering stream of all
 morrows doth roll,

Cry good and past good and most heavenly
 morrow, lord Sun

O Artisan born in the purple,—Workman Heat,—
 Parter of passionate atoms that travail to meet

And be mixed in the death-cold oneness,—
 innermost Guest
 At the marriage of elements,—fellow of publicans,
 —blest

King in the blouse of flame, that loiterest o'er
 The idle skies yet laborst fast evermore,—
 Thou, in the fine forge-thunder, thou, in the
 beat

Of the heart of a man, thou Motive,—Laborer
 Heat

Yea, Artist, thou, of whose art yon sea's all news,
 With his inshore greens and manifold mid-sea
 blues,

Pearl-glint, shell-tint, ancientest perfectest hues
 Ever shaming the maidens,—lily and rose
 Confess thee, and each mild flame that glows
 In the clarified virginal bosoms of stones that
 shine,

It is thine, it is thine:

Thou chemist of storms, whether driving the
 winds a-swirl

Or a-flicker the subtler essences polar that whirl
 In the magnet earth,—yea, thou with a storm
 for a heart,

Rent with debate, many-spotted with question,
 part

From part oft sundered, yet ever a globéd light,
 Yet ever the artist, ever more large and bright
 Than the eye of a man may avail of —manifold
 One,

I must pass from thy face, I must pass from the
 face of the Sun.

Old Want is awake and agog, every wrinkle
 a-frown;

The worker must pass to his work in the terrible
 town:

But I fear not, nay, and I fear not the thing to
 be done;

I am strong with the strength of my lord the
 Sun.

How dark, how dark soever the race that must
 needs be run,

I am lit with the Sun.

Oh, never the mast-high run of the seas

Of traffic shall hide thee,

Never the hell-colored smoke of the factories

Hide thee,

Never the reek of the time's fen-politics

Hide thee,

And ever my heart through the night shall with
 knowledge abide thee,

And ever by day shall my spirit, as one that hath
 tried thee,

Labor, at leisure, in art,—till yonder beside
 thee

My soul shall float, friend Sun,

The day being done.

II

Individuality ²⁷

Sail on, sail on, fair cousin Cloud:

Oh loiter hither from the sea

Still-eyed and shadow-brow'd,
 Steal off from yon far-drifting crowd,
 And come and brood upon the marsh with me.

Yon laboring low horizon-smoke,

Yon stringent sail, toil not for thee

Nor me; did heaven's stroke

The whole deep with drown'd commerce choke:

No pitiless tease of risk or bottomry

Would to thy rainy office close

Thy will, or lock mine eyes from tears,

Part wept for traders'-woes,

Part for that ventures mean as those

In issue bind such sovereign hopes and fears.

Lo, Cloud, thy downward countenance stares

Blank on the blank-faced marsh, and thou

Mindest of dark affairs,

Thy substance seems a warp of cares;

Like late wounds run the wrinkles on thy brow.

Well may'st thou pause, and gloom, and stare,

A visible conscience: I arraign

Thee, criminal Cloud, of rare

Contempts on Mercy, Right, and Prayer,—

Of murders, arsons, thefts,—of nameless stain.

²⁷ Published posthumously in the *Century Magazine*, December, 1882, under the title, "Individuality," and reprinted without change, except for addition of eight lines, in 1884 *Poems* as given here. It was submitted to *Lippincott's* in 1880 but for some reason not published then. Lanier intended to use it in his projected volume, "Hymns of the Marshes." The poem is of special interest because of its revelation of the poet's interest in the increasing conflict between science and religion, determinism and individual responsibility, etc. Charles Anderson prints the poem in the Centennial Edition of Lanier's *Works* under the manuscript title, "The Cloud," with slight verbal variations.

(Yet though life's logic grow as gray
As thou, my soul's not in eclipse)
Cold Cloud, but yesterday
Thy lightning slew a child at play,
And then a priest with prayers upon his lips

For his enemies, and then a bright
Lady that did but ope the door
Upon the storming night
To let a beggar in,—strange spite,—
And then thy sulky rain refused to pour

Till thy quick torch a barn had burned
Where twelve months' store of victual lay,
A widow's sons had earned,
Which done, thy floods with winds returned,—
The river raped their little herd away

What myriad righteous errands high
Thy flames *might* run on! In that hour
Thou slewest the child, oh why
Not rather slay Calamity,
Breeder of Pain and Doubt, infernal Power?

Or why not plunge thy blades about
Some maggot politician throng
Swarming to parcel out
The body of a land, and rout
The maw-conventicle, and ungoige Wrong?

*What the cloud doeth
The Lord knoweth,
The cloud knoweth not
What the artist doeth,
The Lord knoweth,
Knoweth the artist not?*

Well-answered!—O dear artists, ye
—Whether in forms of curve or hue
Or tone your gospels be—
Say wrong *This work is not of me,*
But God it is not true, it is not true

Awful is Art because 'tis free
The artist trembles o'er his plan
Where men his Self must see
Who made a song or picture, he
Did it, and not another, God nor man

My Lord is large, my Lord is strong
Giving, He gave my me is mine
How poor, how strange, how wrong,

To dream He wrote the little song 70
I made to Him with love's unforced design!

Oh, not as clouds dim laws have plann'd
To strike down Good and fight for Ill,—
Oh, not as harps that stand
In the wind and sound the wind's command
Each artist—gift of terror!—owns his will

For thee, Cloud,—if thou spend thine all
Upon the South's o'er brimming sea
That needs thee not, or crawl 80
To the dry provinces, and fall
Till every convert clod shall give to thee

Green worship, if thou grow or fade,
Bring on delight or misery,
Fly east or west, be made
Snow, hail, rain, wind, grass rose, light, shade,
What matters it to thee? There is no thee

Pass, kinsman Cloud, now fair and mild
Discharge the will that's not thine own
I work in freedom wild,
But work, as plays a little child 90
Sure of the Father, Self, and Love, alone
1880 1884

III

Marsh Song—At Sunset ²⁸

Over the monstrous shambling sea,
Over the Caliban sea,
Bright Ariel cloud, thou lingerest
Oh wait, oh wait, in the warm red West,—
Thy Prospero I'll be

Over the humped and fishy sea,
Over the Caliban sea
O cloud in the West, like a thought in the heart
Of pardon, loose thy wing, and start, 60
And do a grace for me 10

Over the huge and huddling sea,
Over the Caliban sea,
Bring hither my brother Antonio,—Man,—
My injurer night breaks the ban
Brother, I pardon thee
1880? 1882

²⁸ Published posthumously in *Our Continent* February 15, 1882, reprinted without change in 1884 *Poems*. The allusions to *The Tempest* should be obvious

IV

The Marshes of Glynn ²⁹

Glooms of the live-oaks, beautiful-braided and
woven
With intricate shades of the vines that myriad-
cloven
Clamber the forks of the multiform boughs,—
Emerald twilights,—
Virginal shy lights,
Wrought of the leaves to allure to the whisper
of vows,
When lovers pace timidly down through the green
colonnades
Of the dim sweet woods, of the dear dark woods,
Of the heavenly woods and glades,
That run to the radiant marginal sand-beach
within
The wide sea-marshes of Glynn,—
Beautiful glooms, soft dusks in the noon-day fire,—
Wildwood privacies, closets of lone desire,
Chamber from chamber parted with wavering
arras of leaves,—
Cells for the passionate pleasure of prayer to the
soul that grieves,
Pure with a sense of the passing of saints through
the wood,
Cool for the dutiful weighing of ill with good,—
O braided dusks of the oak and woven shades of
the vine,
While the riotous noon-day sun of the June-day
long did shine
Ye held me fast in your heart and I held you fast
in mine;
But now when the noon is no more, and riot
is rest,
And the sun is a-wait at the ponderous gate of
the West,
And the slant yellow beam down the wood-aisle
doth seem
Like a lane into heaven that leads from a dream,—
Ay, now, when my soul all day hath drunken the
soul of the oak,
And my heart is at ease from men, and the
weary sound of the stroke

²⁹ See first note on "Hymns of the Marshes." This hymn, with the above title, was first published in *A Masque of Poets* (1878), reprinted without revision in Longfellow's anthology, *Poems of Places* (1879), and with revisions in *Poems* (1884).

Of the scythe of time and the trowel of trade
is low,
And belief overmasters doubt, and I know
that I know,
And my spirit is grown to a lordly great compass
within,
That the length and the breadth and the sweep
of the marshes of Glynn 30
Will work me no fear like the fear they have
wrought me of yore
When length was fatigue, and when breadth was
but bitterness sore,
And when terror and shrinking and dreary
unnamable pain
Drew over me out of the merciless miles of the
plain,—
10 Oh, now, unafraid, I am fain to face
The vast sweet visage of space.
To the edge of the wood I am drawn, I am
drawn,
Where the gray beach glimmering runs, as a belt
of the dawn,
For a metc and a mark
To the forest-dark — 40
So
Affable live-oak, leaning low,—
Thus—with your favor—soft, with a reverent
hand,
(Not lightly touching your person, Lord of the
land!)
Bending your beauty aside, with a step I stand
On the firm-packed sand,
Free
20 By a world of marsh that borders a world of sea.
Sinuous southward and sinuous northward the
shimmering band
Of the sand-beach fastens the fringe of the
marsh to the folds of the land. 50
Inward and outward to northward and southward
the beach-lines linger and curl
As a silver-wrought garment that clings to and
follows the firm sweet limbs of a girl
Vanishing, swerving, evermore curving again into
sight,
Softly the sand-beach wavers away to a dim gray
looping of light
And what if behind me to westward the wall of
the woods stands high?

The world lies east how ample, the marsh and
the sea and the sky!

A league and a league of marsh grass, waist high
broad in the blade

Green, and all of a height, and unflecked with a
light or a shade,

Stretch leisurely off, in a pleasant plain,
To the terminal blue of the main

60

Oh, what is abroad in the marsh and the terminal
sea?

Somehow my soul seems suddenly free
From the weighing of fate and the sad discussion
of sin,

By the length and the breadth and the sweep
of the marshes of Glynn

Ye marshes, how candid and simple and nothing-
withholding and free

Ye publish yourselves to the sky and offer
yourselves to the sea!

Tolerant plains, that suffer the sea and the rains
and the sun,

Ye spread and span like the catholic man who
bath mightily won

God out of knowledge and good out of infinite
pain

And sight out of blindness and punty out of a
stain

70

As the marsh hen secretly builds on the watery
sod,

Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness
of God

I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-hen
flies

In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the
marsh and the skies

By so many roots as the marsh grass sends in the
sod

I will heartily lay me a hold on the greatness of
God

Oh, like to the greatness of God is the greatness
within

The range of the marshes, the liberal marshes of
Glynn

And the sea lends large, as the marsh lo, out of
his plenty the sea

Pours fast full soon the time of the flood-tide
must be

80

Look how the grace of the sea doth go
About and about through the intricate channels
that flow

Here and there,

Everywhere,

Till his waters have flooded the uttermost creeks
and the low lying lanes,

And the marsh is meshed with a million veins
That like as with rosy and silvery essences flow

In the rose and silver evening glow

Farewell, my lord Sun!

The creeks overflow a thousand rivulets run

90

'Twixt the roots of the sod, the blades of the
marsh-grass stir,

Passeth a hurrying sound of wings that westward
whirr,

Passeth, and all is still, and the currents cease to
run,

And the sea and the marsh are one

How still the plains of the waters be!

The tide is in his ecstasy

The tide is at his highest height

And it is night

And now from the Vast of the Lord will the
waters of sleep

Roll in on the souls of men,

100

But who will reveal to our waking ken

The forms that swim and the shapes that creep

Under the waters of sleep?

And I would I could know what swimmeth below
when the tide comes in

On the length and the breadth of the marvellous
marshes of Glynn

*A Ballad of Trees and the Master*³⁰

Into the woods my Master went,
 Clean forspent, foispent
 Into the woods my Master came,
 Forspent with love and shame
 But the olives they were not blind to Him,
 The little gray leaves were kind to Him
 The thorn-tree had a mind to Him
 When into the woods He came

Out of the woods my Master went,
 And He was well content 10
 Out of the woods my Master came,
 Content with death and shame
 When Death and Shame would woo Him last,
 From under the trees they drew Him last:
 'Twas on a tree they slew Him—last
 When out of the woods He came 1880
 1880

FROM

*The English Novel.*A STUDY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY³¹

[FROM CHAPTER I]

My first line will concern itself with the enormous growth in the personality of man which our time reveals when compared for instance with the time of Æschylus. I shall insist with the utmost reverence that between every human being and every other human being exists a radical, unaccountable, inevitable difference from birth, this sacred difference between man and man, by virtue of which I am I and you are you, this marvellous separation which we express by the terms "personal identity," "self-hood," "me,"—it is the unfolding of this, I shall insist, which since the time of Æschylus (say) has wrought all those stupendous changes in the relation of man to God, to physical nature, and to his fellow, which have culminated in the modern cultus. I can best bring before you the length and breadth of this idea of modern personality as I conceive it, by stating it in

terms which have recently been made prominent and familiar by the discussion as to the evolution of genius, a phase of which appears in a very agreeable paper by Mr. John Fiske³² in the current *Atlantic Monthly* on "Sociology and Hero Worship." Says Mr Fiske, in a certain part of this article, "Every species of animals or plants consists of a great number of individuals which are nearly but not exactly alike. Each individual varies slightly in one characteristic or another from a certain type which expresses the average among all the individuals of the species . . . Now the moth with his proboscis twice as long as the average . . . is what we call a spontaneous variation, and the Darwin or the Helmholtz³³ is what we call a 'genius', and the analogy between the two kinds of variation is obvious enough." He proceeds in another place: "We cannot tell why a given moth has a proboscis exactly an inch and a quarter in length any more than we can tell why Shakspeare was a great dramatist,"—there being absolutely no precedent conditions by which the most ardent evolutionist could evolve William Shakspeare, for example, from old John Shakspeare and his wife "The social philosopher must simply accept geniuses as data, just as Darwin accepts his spontaneous variations."

But now if we reflect upon this prodigious series of

³⁰ This is usually regarded as Lanier's finest lyric. It was published in the *Independent*, December 23, 1880, and reprinted without change in the 1884 *Poems*. Lanier is said to have written it at one sitting in fifteen or twenty minutes, "just as we have it without erasure or correction." Christ went into the Gethsemane olive grove to pray before the Crucifixion—see Luke xxii. 39.

³¹ From the manuscripts of Lanier's lectures at Johns Hopkins during the winter of 1881 in a course entitled, "From Æschylus to George Eliot, The Development of Personality," W. H. Browne edited and Mrs. Lanier published in 1883 the volume called *The English Novel*. It is not a history of the novel, but mainly Lanier's theory of the development of personality as recorded in literature. He thought personality had reached a culmination in the novels of George Eliot, his favorite novelist.

³² John Fiske (1842-1901), American philosopher and historian.

³³ Hermann Ludwig Ferdinand von Helmholtz (1821-94), German physicist. Lanier was particularly interested in his experiments with sound.

spontaneous variations which I have called the sacred difference between man and man,—this personality which every father and mother are astonished at anew every day when out of six children they perceive that each one of the six, from the very earliest moment of activity, has shown his own distinct individuality, differing wholly from either parent the child who most resembles the parent physically often having a personality which crosses that of the parent at the sharpest angles,—this radical, indestructible, universal personality which entitles every “me” to its privacy, which has in course of time made the Englishman’s house his castle, which has developed the Rights of Man, the American Republic, the supreme prerogative of the woman to say whom she will love, what man she shall marry,—this personality so precious that not even the miserablest wretch, with no other possession but his personality, has ever been brought to say he would be willing to exchange it entire for that of the happiest being,—this personality which has brought about that whereas in the time of Æschylus the common man was simply a creature of the State, like a modern corporation with rights and powers strictly limited by the State’s charter, now he is a genuine sovereign who makes the State, a king as to every minutest particle of his individuality so long as that kinghood does not cross the kinghood of his fellow,—when we reflect upon this awful spontaneous variation of personality, this “mystery in us which calls itself I” (as Thomas Carlyle has somewhere called it), which makes every man scientifically a human atom, yet an atom endowed above all other atoms with the power to choose its own mode of motion, its own combining equivalent,—when further we reflect upon the relation of each human atom to each other human atom and to the great Giver of personalities to these atoms,—how each is indissolubly bound to each and to Him, and yet how each is discretely parted and impassably separated from each and from Him by a gulf which is simply no less deep than the width between the finite and the infinite,—when we reflect, finally, that it is this simple, indivisible, radical, indestructible, new force which each child brings into the world under the name of its self which controls the whole life of that child, so that its path is always a resultant of its own individual force on the one hand, and of the force of its surrounding circumstances on the other,—we are bound to confess, it seems to me, that such spontaneous variations

carry us upon a plane of mystery very far above those merely unessential variations of the offspring from the parental type in physique, and even above those rare abnormal variations which we call genius

In meditating upon this matter, I found a short time ago a poem of Tennyson’s floating about the newspapers which so beautifully and reverently chants this very sense of personality that I must read you a line or two from it I have since observed that much fun has been made of this piece, and I have seen elaborate burlesques upon it But I think such an attitude could be possible only to one who had not passed along this line of thought At any rate the poem seemed to me a very noble and rapturous hymn to the great Personality above us, acknowledging the mystery of our own personalities as finitely dependent upon, and yet so infinitely divided from His Personality

This poem is called *De Profundis—Two Greetings*, and is addressed to a new born child I have time to read only a line or two, here and there, you will find the whole poem much more satisfactory Please observe, however, the ample comforting phrases and summaries with which Tennyson expresses the poetic idea of that personality which I have just tried to express from the point of view of science, of the evolutionist

Out of the deep, my child, out of the deep,
When all that was to be in all that was
Whirl’d for a million æons thro’ the vast
Waste dawn of multitudinous eddying light—

Thro’ all this changing world of changeless law,
And every phase of ever heightening life

Thou comest

O, dear Spirit, half lost
In thine own shadows and this fleshly sign
That thou art thou—who wailest, being born
And banish’d into mystery and the pain
Of this divisible indivisible world,

Our mortal veil
And shatter’d phantom of that infinite One
Who made thee inconceivably thyself
Out of his whole world—self and all in all—
Live thou, and of the grain and husk, the grape
And ivy berry choose, and still depart
From death to death thro’ life and life, and find

This main miracle, that thou art thou,
With power on thy own act and on the world

We feel we are nothing—for all is Thou and in Thee,
We feel we are something—that also has come from Thee,
We are nothing, O Thou—but Thou wilt help us to be;
Hallowed be Thy name—Hallelujah!

I find some expressions here which give me great satisfaction "The Infinite One who made thee inconceivably thyself,—this divisible-indivisible world, this main miracle that thou art thou," etc

Now it is with this "main miracle," that I am I, and you, you—with this personality, that my first train of thought will busy itself, and I shall try to show, by several concrete illustrations from the lines and between the lines of Æschylus and Plato and the like writers compared with several modern writers, how feeble the sense and influence of it is in their time as contrasted with ours

In my second line of development, I shall call your attention to what seems to me a very remarkable and suggestive fact: to-wit, that Physical Science, Music, and the Novel, all take their rise at the same time: of course, I mean what we moderns call science, music, and the novel. For example, if we select—for the sake of well-known representative names—Sir Isaac Newton (1642), John Sebastian Bach (1685) and Samuel Richardson (1689), the first standing for the rise of modern science, the second for the rise of modern music, the third for the rise of the modern novel, and observe that these three men are born within fifty years of each other, we cannot fail to find ourselves in the midst of a thousand surprising suggestions and inferences. For in our sweeping arc from Æschylus to the present time, fifty years subtend scarcely any space; we may say these men are born together. And here the word accident has no meaning. Time, progress, then, have no accidents.

In this second train of thought I shall endeavor to connect these phenomena with the principle of personality developed in the first train, and shall try to show that this science, music, and the novel, are flowerings-out of that principle in various directions; for instance, each man, in this growth of personality, feeling himself in direct and personal relations with physical nature (not in relations obscured by the vague intermediary hamadryads and fauns of the Greek system), a general desire to know the exact truth about nature arises, and this desire carried to

a certain enthusiasm in the nature of given men—behold the man of science, a similar feeling of direct personal relation to the Unknown, acting similarly upon particular men,—behold the musician, and the ever-increasing tendency of the modern man to worship God in terms of music, likewise, a similar feeling of direct personal relation to each individual member of humanity, high or low, rich or poor, acting similarly, gives us such a novel as the *Mill on the Floss*,³⁴ for instance, where for a long time we find ourselves interested in two mere children—Tom and Maggie Tulliver—or such novels as those of Dickens and his fellow-host who have called upon our human relation to poor, unheroic people

In my third train of thought I shall attempt to show that the increase of personalities thus going on has brought about such complexities of relation that the older forms of expression were inadequate to them, and that the resulting necessity has developed the wonderfully free and elastic form of the modern novel out of the more rigid Greek drama, through the transition form of the Elizabethan drama

And, fourthly, I shall offer copious readings from some of the most characteristic modern novels in illustration of the general principles thus brought forward

Here,—as the old preacher Hugh Latimer³⁵ grimly said inclosing one of his powerful descriptions of future punishment,—you see your fare.

* * *

[FROM CHAPTER II.]

. . . I have found no matter upon which wider or more harmful misconceptions exist among people of culture, and particularly among us Americans, than this matter of the true function of form in art, of the true relation of science—which we may call the knowledge of forms—to art, and most especially of these functions and relations in literary art. These misconceptions have flowered out into widely different shapes.

In one direction, for example, we find a large number of timorous souls who believe that science, in explaining everything—as they singularly fancy—will destroy the possibility of poetry, of the novel, in short of all works of the imagination the idea seeming to be that the imagination always requires the hall of

³⁴ George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* was published in 1860.

³⁵ Hugh Latimer (1485-1555), English prelate and reformer.

life to be darkened before it display its magic, like the modern spiritualistic seance-givers who can do nothing with the rope-tying and the guitars unless the lights are put out

Another form of the same misconception goes precisely to the opposite extreme, and declares that the advance of science with its incidents is going to give a great new revolutionized democratic literature which will wear a slouch hat, and have its shirt open at the bosom, and generally riot in a complete independence of form

And finally—to mention no more than a third phase—we may consider the original misconception to have reached a climax which is at once absurd and infernal in a professedly philosophical work called *Le Roman Experimental*, recently published³⁶ by M. Émile Zola, gravely defending his peculiar novels as the records of scientific experiments and declaring that the whole field of imaginative effort must follow his lead

Now if any of these beliefs are true we are wickedly wasting our time here in studying the novel—at least any other novels except M. Zola's—and we ought to look to ourselves. Seriously, I do not believe I could render you a greater service than by here arraying such contribution as I can make towards some firm, clear and pious conceptions as to this matter of form, of science, in art, before briefly considering these three concrete errors I have enumerated—to wit, the belief (1) that science will destroy all poetry, all novel-writing and all imaginative work generally, (2) that science (as Walt Whitman would have it) will simply destroy the old imaginative products and build up a new formless sort of imaginative product in its stead, and (3) that science will absorb into itself all imaginative effort (as Zola believes) so that every novel will be merely the plain unvarnished record of a scientific experiment in passion. Let me submit two or three principles whose steady light will leave, it seems to me, but little space for perplexity as to these diverse claims

Start, then, in the first place, with a definite recalling to yourself of the province of form throughout our whole daily life. Here we find a striking consensus, at least in spirit, between the deliverances of the sternest science and of the strictest orthodoxy. The latter on the one hand tells us that in the beginning the earth was without form and void, and it is

only after the earth is formulated—after the various forms of the lights, of land and water, bird, fish and man appear—it is only then that life and use and art and relation and religion become possible. What we call the creation therefore, is not the making out of nothing but it is the giving of form to a something which, though existing existed to no purpose because it had no form

On the other hand, the widest generalizations of science bring us practically to the same view. Science would seem fairly to have reduced all this host of phenomena which we call the world into a congeries of motions in many forms. What we know by our senses is simply such forms of these motions as our senses have a correlated capacity for. The atoms of this substance, moving in orbits too narrow for human vision, impress my sense with a certain property which I call hardness or resistance, this "hardness" being simply our name for one form of atom-motion when impressing itself on the human sense. So color, shape, &c., these are our names representing a correlation between certain other forms of motion and our senses

Regarding the whole universe thus as a great congeries of forms of motion, we may now go further and make for ourselves a scientific and useful generalization, reducing a great number of facts to a convenient common denominator by considering that Science is the knowledge of these forms, that Art is the creation of beautiful forms, that Religion is the faith in the infinite Form-giver and in that infinity of forms which many things lead us to believe as existing, but existing beyond any present correlative capacities of our senses,—and finally that Life is the control of all these forms to the satisfaction of our human needs

And now advancing a step when we remember how all accounts, the scientific, the religious, the historical, agree that the progress of things is from chaos or formlessness to form,—and, as we saw in the case of verse and prose,—afterwards from the one-formed to the many-formed, we are not disturbed by any shouts, however stentorian, of a progress that professes to be winning freedom by substituting formlessness for form. We know that the ages are rolling the other way,—who shall stop those wheels? We know that what they really do who profess to substitute formlessness for form is to substitute a bad form for a good one, or an ugly form for a beautiful one

³⁶ Published in 1880

Do not dream of getting rid of form: your most cutting stroke at it but gives us two forms for one. For, in a sense which adds additional reverence to the original meaning of those words, we may devoutly say that in form we live and move and have our being. How strange, then, the furtive apprehension of danger lying behind too much knowledge of form, too much technic, which one is amazed to find prevailing so greatly in our own country.

But, advancing a further step from the particular consideration of science as the knowledge of forms, let us come to the fact that as all art is a congeries of forms, each art must have its own peculiar science: and always we have, in a true sense, the art of an art and the science of that art. For example: correlative to the art of music we have the general science of music, which indeed consists of several quite separate sciences. If a man desire to become a musical composer, he is absolutely obliged to learn (1) the science of Musical Form, (2) the science of Harmony, and (3) the science of Orchestration or Instrumentation.

The science of musical form concerns this sort of matter, for instance. A symphony has generally four great divisions, called movements, separated usually from each other by a considerable pause. Each of these movements has a law of formation: it consists of two main subjects, or melodies, and a modulation-part. The sequence of these subjects, the method of varying them by causing now one and now another of the instruments to come forward and play the subject in hand while subordinate parts are assigned to the others, the interplay of the two subjects in the modulation-part,—all this is the subject-matter of a science which every composer must laboriously learn.

But again he must learn the great science of harmony, and of that wonderful tonality which has caused our music to be practically a different art from what preceding ages called music: this science of harmony having its own body of classifications and formulated laws just as the science of geology has, and a voluminous literature of its own. Again, he must painfully learn the range and capacities of each orchestral instrument,—lest he write passages for the violin which no violin can play, &c.,—and further, the particular ideas which seem to associate themselves with the tone-color of each instrument as the idea of women's voices with the clarinet, the idea of tenderness and childlikeness with the oboe, and so on. This is not all: the musical composer may indeed write a

symphony if he has these three sciences of music well in hand, but a fourth science of music, namely, the physics of music, or musical acoustics, has now grown to such an extent that every composer will find himself lame without a knowledge of it.

And so the art of painting has its correlative science of painting, involving laws of optics, and of form; the art of sculpture, its correlative science of sculpture, involving the science of human anatomy, &c., and each one of the literary arts has its correlative science—the art of verse its science of verse, the art of prose its science of prose. Lastly, we all know that no amount of genius will supply the lack of science in art. Phidias³⁷ may be all afire with the conception of Jove, but unless he is a scientific man to the extent of a knowledge of anatomy, he is no better artist than Strephon³⁸ who cannot mould the handle of a goblet. What is Beethoven's genius until Beethoven has become a scientific man to the extent of knowing the sciences of Musical Form, of Orchestration, and of Harmony?

But now if I go on and ask what would be the worth of Shakspeare's genius unless he were a scientific man to the extent of knowing the science of English verse, or what would be George Eliot's genius unless she knew the science of English prose or the science of novel-writing, a sort of doubtful stir arises, and it would seem as if a suspicion of some vague esoteric difference between the relation of the literary arts to their correlative sciences and the relation of other arts to their correlative sciences influenced the general mind.

* * *

And so, away with this folly: science, instead of being the enemy of poetry, is its quartermaster and commissary—it forever purveys for poetry; and just so much more as it shall bring man into contact with nature, just so much more large and intense and rich will be the poetry of the future in its contents, just so much finer and more abundant in its forms.

And here we may advance to our second class who believe that the poetry of the future is to be democratic and formless.

Here let me first carefully disclaim and condemn all that flippant and sneering tone which dominates

³⁷ Greek sculptor of fifth century B.C. One of his most famous works is his statue of Zeus.

³⁸ A shepherd in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*.

so many discussions of Whitman. While I differ from him utterly as to every principle of artistic procedure, while he seems to me the most stupendously mistaken man in all history as to what constitutes true democracy, and the true advance of art and man, while I am immeasurably shocked at the sweeping invasions of those reserves which depend on the very personality I have so much insisted upon, and which the whole consensus of the ages has considered more and more sacred with every year of growth in delicacy, yet, after all these prodigious allowances, I owe some keen delights to a certain combination of bigness and naivety which make some of Whitman's passages so strong and taking, and indeed, on the one occasion when Whitman has abandoned his theory of formlessness and written in form he has made *My Captain*, O my Captain surely one of the most tender and beautiful poems in any language.

I need quote but a few scraps from characteristic sentences here and there in a recent paper of Whitman's in order to present a perfectly fair view of his whole doctrine. When, for instance, he declares that Tennyson's poetry is not the poetry of the future because, although it is "the highest order of verbal melody, exquisitely clean and pure and almost always perfumed like the tubc-rose to an extreme of sweetness," yet it has "never one democratic page," and is "never free, naive poetry, but involved, labored, quite sophisticated," when we find him bragging of "the measureless viciousness of the great radical republic" (the United States of course) "with its ruffianly nominations and elections, its loud, ill-pitched voice, utterly regardless whether the verb agrees with the nominative, its fights, errors, eructations, repulsions, dishonesties, audacities, those fearful and varied, long and continued storm-and-stress stages (so offensive to the well-regulated, college-bred mind) wherewith nature, history and time block out nationalities more powerful than the past," and when finally we hear him tenderly declaring that "meanwhile democracy awaits the coming of its bards in silence and in twilight—but 'tis the twilight of dawn"—we are in sufficient possession of the distinctive catch-words which summarize his doctrine.

In examining it, a circumstance occurs to me at the outset which throws a strange but effective light upon the whole argument. It seems curious to reflect that the two poets who have most avowedly written for the people, who have claimed most distinctively to

represent and embody the thought of the people, and to be bone of the people's bone and flesh of the people's flesh, are precisely the two who have most signally failed of all popular acceptance and who have most exclusively found audience at the other extreme of culture. These are Wordsworth and Whitman. We all know how strenuously and faithfully Wordsworth believed that in using the simplest words and treating the lowliest themes, he was bringing poetry 10 back near to the popular heart, yet Wordsworth's greatest admirer is Mr. Matthew Arnold, the apostle of culture, the farthest remove from anything that could be called popular and in point of fact it is probable that many a peasant who would feel his blood stir in hearing *A man's a man for a' that*,³⁹ would grin and guffaw if you should read him Wordsworth's *Lambs*⁴⁰ and *Peter Grays*.⁴¹

And a precisely similar fate has met Whitman. Professing to be a mudsill and glorying in it, chanting democracy and shirt sleeves and equal rights, declaring that he is nothing if not one of the people, nevertheless the people, the democracy, will yet have nothing to do with him, and it is safe to say that his sole audience has lain among such representatives of the highest culture as Emerson and the English *illuminated*.

The truth is, that if closely examined, Whitman, instead of being a true democrat, is simply the most incorrigible of aristocrats masquing in a peasant's costume, and his poetry, instead of being the natural outcome of a fresh young democracy, is a product which would be impossible except in a highly civilized society.

[FROM CHAPTER III]

* * *

I think it interesting to compare Whitman's often expressed contempt for poetic beauty—he taunts the young magazine writers of the present time with having the beauty-disease—with some utterances of one who praised the true function of ruggedness in works the world will not soon forget. I mean Thomas Carlyle, who has so recently passed into the Place where the strong and the virtuous and the beautiful souls assemble themselves. In one of Carlyle's essays

³⁹ Robert Burns "For a' that and a' that."

⁴⁰ A Pet Lamb.

⁴¹ Probably confusion of Peter Bell and Lucy Gray. Lanier it is likely, means the bathetic "Peter Bell."

he speaks as follows of Poetic Beauty: These words scarcely sound as if they came from the lover of Danton and Mirabeau.⁴²

"It dwells and is born in the inmost Spirit of Man, united to all love of Virtue, to all true belief in God, or rather, it is one with this love and this belief, another phase of the same highest principle in the mysterious infinitude of the human Soul. To apprehend this beauty of poetry, in its full and purest brightness, is not easy, but difficult, thousands on 10 thousands eagerly read poems, and attain not the smallest taste of it, yet to all uncorrupted hearts, some effulgences of this heavenly glory are here and there revealed, and to apprehend it clearly and wholly, to acquire and maintain a sense of heart that sees and worships it, is the last perfection of all humane culture."

In the name of all really manful democracy, in the name of the true strength that only can make our republic reputable among the nations, let us repudiate 20 the strength that is no stronger than a human biceps, let us repudiate the manfulness that averages no more than six feet high. My democrat, the democrat whom I contemplate with pleasure, the democrat who is to write or to read the poetry of the future, may have a mere thread for his biceps, yet he shall be strong enough to handle hell, he shall play ball with the earth; and albeit his stature may be no more than a boy's, he shall still be taller than the great redwoods of California, his height shall be the height of great 30 resolution and love and faith and beauty and knowledge and subtle meditation, his head shall be forever among the stars.

But here we are met with the cry of freedom. This poetry is free, it is asserted, because it is independent of form. But this claim is also too late. It should have been made at least before the French Revolution. We all know what that freedom means in politics which is independent of form, of law. It means myriad-fold slavery to a mob. As in politics, so in art. 40 Once for all, in art, to be free is not to be independent of any form, it is to be master of many forms. Does the young artist of the Whitman school fancy that he is free because under the fond belief that he is yielding himself to nature, stopping not for words lest he may fail to make what Whitman proudly calls "a savage song," he allows himself to be blown about by every wind of passion? Is a ship free because, with-

out rudder or sail, it is turned loose to the winds, and has no master but nature? Nature is the tyrant of tyrants. Now, just as that freedom of the ship on the sea means shipwreck, so independence of form in art means death. Here one recurs with pleasure to the aphorism cited in the last lecture: in art, as elsewhere, "he who will not answer to the rudder shall answer to the rocks." I find all the great artists of time striving after this same freedom, but it is not by destroying, it is by extending the forms of art, that all sane and sober souls hope to attain. In a letter of Beethoven's to the Archduke Rudolph, written in 1819, I find him declaring "But freedom and progress are our true aim in the world of art, just as in the great creation at large."

We have seen how in the creation at large progress is effected by the continual multiplication of new forms. It was this advance which Beethoven wished to become master of new and more beautiful forms, not to abolish form. In a letter of his to Matthiessen, as early as 1800, accompanying a copy of *Adelaide*, we may instructively gather what he thought of this matter. "Indeed even now I send you *Adelaide* with a feeling of timidity. You know yourself what changes the lapse of some years brings forth in an artist who continues to make progress, the greater the advances we make in art the less are we satisfied with our works of an early date." This unstudied declaration becomes full of significance when we remember that this same *Adelaide* is still held, by the common consent of all musicians, to be the most perfect song-form in music; and it is given to young composers as a type and model from which all other forms are to be developed. We may sum up the whole matter by applying to these persons who desire formlessness, words which were written of those who have been said to desire death:

Whatever crazy Sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly longed for death.

'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
O life, not death, for which we pant,
More life, and fuller, that I want

In art, form and chaos are so nearly what life and death are in nature, that we do not greatly change this stanza if we read:

'Tis form whereof our art is scant,
O form, not chaos, for which we pant,
More form, and fuller, that I want.

⁴² Leaders in the French Revolution.

I find some deliverances in Epictetus⁴³ which speak so closely to more than one of the points just discussed that I must quote a sentence or two "What then," he says in the chapter "About Freedom," "is that which makes a man free from hindrance and makes him his own master? For wealth does not do it, nor consulship, nor provincial government, nor royal power, but something else must be discovered. What then is that which when we write makes us free from hindrance and unimpeded? The knowledge of the art of writing. What then is it (which gives freedom) in playing the lute? The science of playing the lute." If Whitman's doctrine is true, the proper method of acquiring freedom on the lute is to bring lute-music to that point where the loud jangling chord produced by a big hand sweeping at random across the strings is to take the place of the finical tunes and harmonies now held in esteem. "Therefore," continues Epictetus, "in life, also, it is the science of life.

When you wish the body to be sound, is it in your power or not?—It is not. When you wish it to be healthy? Neither is this in my power." (I complain of Whitman's democracy that it has no provision for sick, or small, or puny, or plamfeatured, or hump backed, or any deformed people, and that his democracy is really the worst kind of aristocracy, being an aristocracy of nature's favorites in the matter of muscle.) And so of estate, house, horses, life and death,—Epictetus continues, these are not in our power, they cannot make us free. So that, in another chapter, he cries "This is the true athlete, the man who exercises himself against such appearances. Stay, wretch, do not be carried away. Great is the combat, divine is the work: it is for kingship, for freedom, for happiness."

And lastly, the Poetry of the Future holds that all modern poetry, Tennyson particularly, is dainty and over-perfumed, and Whitman speaks of it with that contempt which he everywhere affects for the dandy. But surely—I do not mean this disrespectfully—what age of time ever yielded such a dandy as the founder of this school, Whitman himself? The simpering beau who is the product of the tailor's art is certainly absurd enough, but what difference is there between that and the other dandy-upside-down who from equal motives of affectation throws away coat and vest, dons a slouch hat, opens his shirt so as to expose his breast, and industriously circulates his portrait,

thus taken, in his own books. And this dandyism—the dandyism of the roustabout—I find in Whitman's poetry from beginning to end. Everywhere it is conscious of itself, everywhere it is analyzing itself, everywhere it is posing to see if it cannot assume a naive and striking attitude, everywhere it is screwing up its eyes, not into an eyeglass like the conventional dandy, but into an expression supposed to be fearsomely rough and barbaric and frightful to the terror-stricken reader, and it is almost safe to say that one half of Whitman's poetic work has consisted of a detailed description of the song he is going to sing. It is the extreme of sophistication in writing.

But if we must have dandyism in our art, surely the softer sort, which at least leans toward decorum and gentility, is preferable, for that it worst becomes only laughable, while the rude dandyism, when it does acquire a factitious interest by being a blasphemy against real manhood, is simply tiresome.

I have thus dwelt upon these claims of the Whitman school, not so much because of any intrinsic weight they possess, as because they are advanced in such taking and sacred names,—of democracy, of manhood, of freedom, of progress. Upon the most earnest examination, I can find it nothing but wholly undemocratic, not manful, but dandy, not free, because the slave of nature, not progressive, because its whole momentum is derived from the physical-large which ceased to astonish the world ages ago, in comparison with spiritual greatness.

Indeed, this matter has been pushed so far, with the apparent, but wholly unreal sanction of so many influential names, that in speaking to those who may be poets of the future, I cannot close these hasty words upon the Whitman school without a fervent protest, in the name of all art and all artists, against a poetry which has painted a great scrawling picture of the human body and has written under it, "*This is the soul*," which shouts a profession of religion in every line, but of a religion that, when examined, reveals no tenet, no rubric save that a man must be natural, must abandon himself to every passion, and which contentedly roars its belief in God but with a camoufado as if it were patting the Deity on the back and bidding Him *Cheer up* and hope for further encouragement.

It seems like a curious sarcasm of time that even the form of Whitman's poetry is not poetry of the future but tends constantly into the rhythm of

⁴³ Celebrated Stoic philosopher of the first century A.D.

Brimmanna boda abeod eft ongean,⁴⁴

which is the earliest rhythm of our poetry. The only difference which Whitman makes is in rejecting the alliteration, in changing the line-division, so as to admit longer lines, and the allowance of much liberty in interrupting this general rhythm for a moment. It is remarkable indeed that this old rhythm is still distinctly the prevalent rhythm of English prose. Some years ago Walter Savage Landor remarked that the dactyl was "the bindweed of English prose," and by the dactyl he means simply a word of three syllables with the accent on the first, like *Brimmanna*. For example

I loaf and invite my soul;
I lean and loaf at my ease, observing a spear of summer
grass
I exist as I am—that is enough,
If no other in the world be aware, I sit content;
And if each and all be aware I sit content
Washes and razors for foofoos, and for me freckles and
a bristling beard.
Walt Whitman am I, a cosmos of mighty Manhattan
the son⁴⁵

We are here arrived at a very fitting point to pass on and consider that third misconception of the relation between science and art which has been recently formulated by M. Émile Zola in his work called *Le Roman Expérimental*. Zola's name has been so widely associated with a certain class of novels that I am unfortunately under no necessity to describe them, and I need only say that the work in question is a formal reply to a great number of objections which have come from many quarters as to the characters and events which Zola's novels have brought before the public.

His book, though a considerable volume, may be said to consist of two sentences which the author has varied with great adroitness into many forms. These two sentences I may sum up as follows. (1) every novel must hereafter be the entirely unimaginative record of an experiment in human passion; and (2) every writer of the Romantic school in France, particularly Victor Hugo, is an ass. You are not to suppose that in this last sentiment I have strengthened Zola's expressions. A single quotation will show suffi-

⁴⁴ From the Anglo-Saxon poem, *The Battle of Maldon*, l. 49, "Pirate messenger, go back and announce." The poem was probably written soon after the battle in 991.

⁴⁵ These lines from "Song of Myself" are not consecutive in the poem—and slightly inaccurately quoted.

cient authority. As for example where M. Zola cries out to those who are criticising him "Every one says: 'Ah yes, the naturalists! they are those men with dirty hands who want all novels to be written in slang, and choose the most disgusting subjects.' Not at all! you lie! . . . Do not say that I am idiot enough to wish to paint nothing but the gutter."

But with this quarrel we are not here concerned, I simply wish to examine in the briefest way Zola's proposition to convert the novel into a work of science. His entire doctrine may be fairly, indeed amply gathered in the following quotations:

We continue by our observations and experiments the work of the physiologist, who has himself employed that of the physicist and the chemist. We after a fashion pursue scientific psychology in order to complete scientific physiology, and in order to complete the evolution, we need only carry to the study of nature and man the invaluable tool of the experimental method. In a word, we should work upon characters, passions, human and social facts, as the physicist and chemist work with inorganic bodies, as the physiologist works with living organisms. Determinism controls everything.

This, then, is what constitutes the experimental novel, —to understand the mechanism of human phenomena, to show the machinery of intellectual and emotional manifestations as physiology shall explain them to us under the influence of heredity and surrounding circumstances, then to show man living in the social *milieu* which he has himself produced, and which he modifies every day, while at the same time experiencing in his turn a continual transformation. So we rest on physiology, we take man isolated from the hands of the physiologist to continue the solution of the problem and to solve scientifically the question, How men live as members of society.—We are, in a word, experimental philosophers, showing by experiment how a passion exhibits itself in certain social surroundings. The day when we shall understand the mechanism of this passion, it may be treated, reduced, made as inoffensive as possible.

These propositions need not detain us long. In the first place, let us leave the vagueness of abstract assertions and, coming down to the concrete, let us ask who is to make the experiment recorded in the novel? Zola says, "We (we novelists) are experimental philosophers, showing by experiment how a passion exhibits itself in certain social surroundings." Very well; in one of Zola's most popular novels, the heroine Nana, after a remarkable career, dies of small-pox, and a great naturalistic ado is made over this death. A correspondent of the *Herald*, writing from Paris, says: "In a very few days we are to be treated to the

stage version of *Nana*, at the Ambigu Nana, it will be remembered, dies at the end of the story, of small pox. We are to be given every incident of the agony—every mark of the small-pox. Prettv Mlle Massin (who is to play this death scene) is to be the crowning attraction of the new play. We shall be shown a real death of small pox, or the nearest possible approach to it. Mlle Massin, who is to sustain the pleasing part of the 'heroine,' will make her pretty face hideous for the occasion. At half past 11 10 every evening she will issue from behind the drapery of a bed, clad only in the most indispensable of nightly raiment—and that 'in most admired disorder'—her neck, cheeks and forehead disfigured, changed and unrecognizable for simulated pustules. At twenty minutes to 12 the pustules will be too much for her, and she will expire. At a quarter to 12 the deafening applause of the public will call her to life again, and she will bow her acknowledgments."

Applying Zola's theory, sociology is to find here a 20 very instructive record of how a woman such as Nana would comport herself when dying of small-pox, and furthermore, his description of it must be an exact record of an experiment in death from small-pox conducted by M. Zola in person. But now recurring to our question let us ask, how could M. Zola conduct this experiment? It would certainly be inconvenient for him to catch the small-pox and die, with a view to recording his sensations, and yet it is perfectly apparent that the conditions of scientific experiment 30 could not be satisfied in any other way. M. Zola would probably reply with effusion, that he had taken pains to go to a small pox hospital and to study with great care the behavior of a patient dying with that disease. But, we immediately rejoin, this is very far from what his theory bound him to show us: his theory bound him to show us not some person, any person, dying of small-pox, but Nana with all her individuality derived from heredity and from her own spontaneous variation—it was Nana dying of small- 40 pox that he must set before us, one person dies one way and another person dies another way, even of the same disease. Smith, a very tragic person, would make a death-scene full of tragic message and gesture, Brown might close his eyes and pass without a word, Nana, particularly, with her peculiar career and striking individuality, would naturally make a peculiar and striking death. Now since Nana is purely a creation of Zola, (unless indeed the novel is a biography,

which is not pretended) Zola is the only person in the world who understands Nana's feelings in death or on any occasion, and this being so it is simply impossible that Zola could make a scientific experiment of Nana's death from small pox without dying himself. This seems so absurd that one goes back to *Le Roman Expérimental* to see if Zola's idea of a scientific experiment has not something peculiar about it, and one quickly finds that it has. It is in fact interesting to observe that though Zola has this word experiment continually on his lips, yet he never means that the novelist is to conduct a real, gross, downright, actual brute of an experiment, and the word with him is wholly Pickwickian, signifying no more than that the novelist, availing himself of such realistic helps as he can find in hospitals and the like, is to evolve therefrom something which he believes to be the natural course of things. Examine the book wherever you may, the boasted experiment, the pivot 50 of the whole system, fades into this.

The experiment of Zola is as if a professor of chemistry, knowing something of the properties of given substances, desiring to see how a certain molecule would behave itself in the presence of a certain other molecule, hitherto untried in this connection, instead of going into his laboratory and bringing the molecules together and observing what they actually did, should quietly sit before his desk and write off a comfortable account of how he thought these molecules would behave, judging from his previous knowledge of their properties. It is still more interesting to find that Zola is apparently unconscious of the difference between these two modes of experiment. About this unconsciousness I have my own theory, I think it entirely probable that if these two kinds of experiment were described to Zola he would maintain with perfect good faith that they were exactly the same. There is a phase of error—perhaps we may call it hallucination—in which certain sorts of minds come to believe that two things which have been habitually associated are always the same. For instance, a friend of mine has told me that a certain estimable teacher of the French language, who, after carrying on his vocation for many years during which English and French became equally instinctive tongues to him, was accustomed to maintain that English and French were absolutely one and the same language. "When you say *water*," he was accustomed to argue to my friend, "you mean water when I say

l'eau I mean water *water—l'eau, l'eau—water*, do you not see? We mean the same thing, it is the same language”

However this may be, nothing is clearer than that Zola's conception of an experiment is what I have described it—namely, an evolving, from the inner consciousness, of what the author thinks the experimental subjects would do under given circumstances. Here are some of Zola's own words and surely nothing more naive was ever uttered “The writer” (of 10 the novel) “employs both observation and experiment. The observer gives the facts as he has observed them and establishes the solid ground on which his characters shall march, and the phenomena shall develop themselves. *Then the experimenter appears and conducts the experiment, that is to say*” (I am quoting from M. Zola) “*he moves the characters in a particular story to show that the sequence of facts will be such as is determined by the study of phenomena.*” That is to say, to carry Zola's “experiment” 20 into chemistry knowing something of chlorine and something of hydrogen separately, a chemist who wishes to know their behavior under each other's influence may “experiment” upon that behavior by

giving his opinion as to what chlorine and hydrogen would likely do under given circumstances

It seems incredible, but it is logically beyond question, that by this short process we have got to the bottom of this whole elaborate system of the Experimental Novel and have found that it is nothing but a repetition of the old, old trick of the hand of Jacob and the voice of Esau.⁴⁴ Think how much self-sacrifice and labor, of how many noble and brave spirits, from Horrox⁴⁵ and Hooke⁴⁶ in the seventeenth century down to the hundreds of scientific men who at this moment are living obscure and laborious lives in the search of truth,—think, I say, how much fervent and pious labor has gone to invest the mere name of scientific experiment with that sacredness under which the Zola school is now claiming the rights and privileges of science for what we have seen is *not* science, and what, we might easily see if it were worth showing, is mere corruption. The hand is the hand of 20 science but the voice is the voice of a beast

⁴⁴ Cf. Genesis xvii. 22

⁴⁵ Jeremiah Horrox, or Horrocks (1617–41), celebrated English astronomer.

⁴⁶ Robert Hooke (1635–1703), English natural philosopher and mathematician

EMILY DICKINSON (1830-1886)

Today Emily Dickinson is almost universally recognized as one of the literary giants of nineteenth century American literature, but when this frail little lady died in 1886 only a few of her unpublished poems were known to a small group of friends, and the general public had no knowledge whatever of her existence. Three poems had been published anonymously, but of course they attracted little attention. Hundreds of better ones had been accumulating for half a lifetime in her quiet home in a small New England village. The manuscripts were disorganized, many well-nigh illegible, for she had done nothing to make publication easy or likely. But fortunately most of them were finally more or less deciphered and printed, though the circumstances and methods of much of the editing have not yet given us a complete or an accurate text. One of the greatest evidences of her genius is the fact that despite the piecemeal, erratic publication of her poems, Emily Dickinson's reputation has steadily grown since the appearance of the first collection of her verse in 1890. During the past decade several books with new poems and information have appeared to increase her literary stature, and it is now safe to predict that her reputation will continue to increase. To appreciate this prediction we need to know not only the story of her growth as a poet but also the story of the editing of her poems.

Emily Dickinson was born December 10, 1830, in the little town of Amherst, Massachusetts, in a comfortable brick house on Main Street built by her grandfather, a lawyer and town leader who had staked his own fortune on the founding of Amherst College. Her father, Edward Dickinson, followed closely in his father's footsteps, serving as trustee and treasurer of the college until his death in 1874, engaging in a lucrative law practice, becoming a member of the State Legislature and Senate and finally of Congress. All sources of information testify to his upright character and success as a citizen and politician, but the biographers do not agree on his personal qualities as a father. His family was devoted to him, but some biographers think he was puritanical and bigoted. His younger daughter, Lavinia, claimed late in life that he prevented his two girls from entertaining young men

in their home, though Emily's letters do not corroborate this accusation. Mrs. Millicent Todd Bingham, who as a neighbor knew the Dickinson home when she was a young girl, does not remember that he ever smiled. But Professor George F. Whicher, who has taught for many years at Amherst College and has talked with people who remember the Dickinson family, thinks the Squire was no more stern than other fathers of the time, and that he was a friendly and likable man.

The town was far more conservative than Unitarian Cambridge, and many vestiges of Calvinistic Puritanism still lingered, as they did in many a remote New England village. Card games and dancing were frowned upon; there were few concerts, and no theatres. Going to church was one of the main social amusements, and the Dickinsons regularly attended the Congregational Church, though Edward Dickinson did not join until 1850, during an old-fashioned "revival." One of the most serious purposes of the College was to send out missionaries to all parts of the world, a purpose which strongly influenced the town itself. Squire Dickinson was not an anachronism as he walked impressively with shiny beaver and gold-headed cane down the streets of Amherst.

Of Mr. Dickinson's wife, Emily Norcross, there are few records. Emily said cryptically that she did "not care for thought," and all indications are that she was an intellectual nonentity, completely dominated by her strong-minded husband and her clever children. During her last years she was an invalid, and Emily devotedly helped take care of her.

Squire Dickinson's only son, Austin, grew up to resemble his father, whose place he took in the community and the college. To strangers he also had an austere appearance, but all members of his family adored him, though when he and his father were together they quarreled. After teaching in Boston and taking a law degree at Harvard, he returned to practice law in Amherst. But in his marriage to Susan Gilbert, daughter of a too convivial tavern keeper, he brought misery upon himself and his sisters, who lived next door, where he often fled, in Emily's words, from the "Vesuvius at home."

Concerning Lavinia the testimony is confusing. She is said to have been an attractive child; but as the years passed, she lived only for her garden, her cats, and Emily, whom she worshipped. Spinsterhood apparently soured her countenance and embittered her mind. Mrs. Bingham remembers her as a neurotic old hag, but Professor Whicher, more charitably, thinks she was not without charm even in her old age.

Emily herself, though older than her sister, seems to have been the pampered pet of the family. Even though Austin and Lavinia thought her a genius, they always protected her like a child, and perhaps they delayed her emotional maturity. To judge by her portrait, she retained a certain girlish charm into her womanhood, but she is said never to have been pretty—with the possible exception of her red hair and brown eyes. Perhaps as a schoolgirl she attempted to compensate for her physical deficiency by cultivating her wit and her gift of verbal expression. Her schoolmates remembered her especially for her fun-loving sociability, her satirical literary compositions, and her clever letters. There are no indications, however, that she was abnormal or maladjusted. In her juvenile letters she speaks often of death, but the religious atmosphere which surrounded her childhood reminded her of the seriousness of life and the need of preparing for the world to come. She attended the Academy founded by her grandfather and was then enrolled for a year at Mount Holyoke Seminary, rigorously presided over by the famous woman educator, Mary Lyon, who combined training of the mind with saving of the soul. Emily attempted to "find grace," and at times became deeply disturbed that she could not, but she remained, in her own words, "one of the lingering bad ones." She always liked her teachers and did well in her studies, both in the Academy and Seminary, but was frequently absent from the classroom on account of poor health. Her father decided that she was not strong enough for a second year in college, and Emily returned to the protection of her home in Amherst, where she spent the remainder of her life except for a couple of months in Washington and Philadelphia while her father was in Congress and, later, two prolonged visits to Boston to have her eyes treated.

To all outward appearances Emily Dickinson lived in Amherst as quietly as a nun, becoming gradually more shy and reserved until she finally became a complete recluse. During the last fifteen years of her life she dressed entirely in white, saw no one except members of her own family and occasionally an intimate friend, sought diversion only in her garden, and assiduously worked on her poems. Probably in 1863

she suffered something like a nervous breakdown. In a letter to a cousin with whom she corresponded regularly she alluded to "a snarl in the brain which don't unravel yet, and that old nail in my breast pricked me. . . ." The following year she wrote to another correspondent, "I work in my prison and make guests for myself."

What experiences or emotional shocks brought about this retirement from the world and focused Emily Dickinson's attention so almost exclusively upon the private drama of her mind we can only conjecture from the evidence of her poems and her letters, but at least the outlines of her spiritual biography are beginning to emerge. In 1862 she wrote to T. W. Higginson:

When a little girl, I had a friend who taught me Immortality; but venturing too near, himself, he never returned. Soon after, my tutor died, and for several years my lexicon was my only companion. Then I found one more, but he was not contented I be his scholar, so he left the land.

Biographers have sought for years to supply names and dates for these tantalizing allusions. There now seems little doubt that the friend who taught her "Immortality" but ventured too near himself was a young man who studied in her father's law office during the winter of 1847-48, Benjamin Franklin Newton. Ten years older than Emily, he was more widely read, and introduced her to stimulating literature, smuggling books to her of which her father disapproved. The following winter he returned to his home town, Worcester, where he married in 1851 and died two years later. Whether or not Ben Newton meant anything else to Emily Dickinson, it was probably he who gave her confidence in her poetic ability. In another letter to Colonel Higginson from whom she had sought literary criticism, she confessed:

Your letter gave no drunkenness, because I tasted rum before. . . . My dying tutor told me that he would like to live till I had been a poet, but Death was much of mob as I could master, then.

The same year that Ben Newton died another young man who had actually been Emily Dickinson's teacher, Leonard Humphrey, also died, and several of the poems which refer to the "two I lost" probably express her grief of this period. Isolated from literary circles and competent judges of her own productions, Emily was always hungry for companionship with minds capable of tutoring her own, as in her turning to Higginson for advice.

Neither of these "tutors" of Emily Dickinson's youth, however, was responsible for the great crisis of

her life, which apparently reached a climax some time in 1862. This lover—and the language of many of the poems is unmistakably that of love—was the “atom preferred to all the lists of clay,” the “fugitive, whom to know was life.” But it was a love “in vision and in veto.” In the spring of 1862 she referred to him as having “left the land,” and on April 25 of the same year she wrote to Colonel Higginson of “a terror since September, I could tell to none.”

Various biographers have advanced candidates for the rôle of the lover Lavinia, perhaps in an attempt to counteract some of the wild gossip circulating in Amherst, told a romantic story of Emily's infatuation with a classmate, George Gould, disapproved by Squire Dickinson, and Genevieve Taggard has elaborated this conjectural romance. But the known facts do not corroborate the hypothesis. Another biographer, Josephine Pollitt, has argued that the man was Major Edward B. Hunt, husband of Emily's friend, Helen Hunt, though Major Hunt is known to have had a marked dislike for Miss Dickinson. Mrs. Bianchi attempted to treat the problem in vague and confused imagery, but without shedding much light. Professor Whicher has given the most convincing solution in his identification of the man as Reverend Charles Wadsworth, a distinguished Presbyterian minister in Philadelphia whom Emily met in May, 1854, during her trip to Washington and Philadelphia. Still grieving over Ben Newton's death, she probably sought spiritual guidance from Reverend Wadsworth. At any rate we know that she was greatly impressed by this famous pastor and carried on a correspondence with him. He visited her in Amherst some time in 1860, and there may have been a second visit. In the spring of 1862 he accepted a church in California and “left the land” by ship, the sea route by way of Panama still being the easiest means of travel between the Eastern Seaboard and the West Coast. Emily's “terror,” however, had been with her since the previous September, though nothing is known of the specific details. That the distinguished clergyman was philandering seems improbable, and he may have been entirely unaware of his emotional effect upon his young friend in Amherst. When he met her in 1854, he was forty and Emily twenty-three years old, a considerable discrepancy in age. Moreover, the Reverend Wadsworth was married to a congenial wife. Nothing remained for his young lover but to hide her pain and find such relief as she could in her poems. Professor Whicher says that “Emily Dickinson's friendship with Wadsworth, unlike her earlier friendship with Ben Newton, was not primarily an intellectual affair. It taught her all that

a woman can learn who gives herself spiritually and imaginatively to the man of her choice, and more than she needed to know of suffering.”

One cannot say that Emily Dickinson's hopeless infatuation for someone she could never marry made her a poet, for she was a poet before she met Reverend Charles Wadsworth, but, as a poet, she did gain much from the experience. Her agonizing frustration and self-pity passed into more objective analysis of her own states of mind until she was finally able to dramatize her experience in symbols of universal significance. Mental suffering taught her also to see with magnified intensity the simple beauties of nature in her own backyard. At times she could declare, “I find ecstasy in living, the mere sense of living is joy enough.” She might, in fact, be called the poet of ecstasy, for her poems are nearly all ecstatic—either with joy or pain. And she was not unaware of or indifferent to the suffering of others. War she called “an oblique place,” and she was almost prostrated with grief over the casualties of Amherst men on the battlefield. Her actual contact with the life of the nation during the fateful years of the Civil War was remote, but her own moods during the sixties and seventies were often analogous to those of the country at large.

It has often been thought that Emily Dickinson's own private tragedy prevented her from publishing, but actually, like almost every creative artist, she longed for an audience, and her failure to find one in her own lifetime was due more to her short-sighted advisers than to her own inclinations. She sent poems and solicited criticism from Col. T. W. Higginson, one of the popular authors and critics of the day, from Samuel Bowles, owner of the *Springfield Republican*, from Josiah Holland, associated with Bowles and first editor of *Scribner's Magazine*, and from Thomas Niles of the prominent Roberts Brothers publishing firm. All recognized Emily Dickinson's originality and claimed to enjoy her poetry, but they thought it too fragile and eccentric for the literary public of the day. What chiefly bothered them were her liberties in style and grammar. Colonel Higginson patiently corrected what he regarded as her vagaries, but Emily could not be instructed. Even after her death, when her poetry had been rescued from oblivion by Mrs. Todd, Higginson was still puzzled.

The impression of a wholly new and original poetic genius was as distinct on my mind at the first reading of these four poems [sent to him for criticism] as it is now, after thirty years of further knowledge, and with it came the problem never yet solved, what place ought to be

assigned in literature to what is so remarkable, yet so elusive of criticism. The bee himself did not evade the schoolboy more than she evaded me, and even to this day I still stand somewhat bewildered, like the boy.

All one can say is that Emily Dickinson was unfortunate in turning to the men she did for advice. Since her poems quickly found an audience in 1890, they probably would have earlier.

The one person who did try to persuade Emily to give her poems to the world was her childhood friend, Mrs. Helen Hunt (later Mrs. Jackson). In the early 1870's she returned to Amherst and tried to counteract the advice of the Higginsonian "tutors," but without success. Exactly what went on during the many hours while she was closeted with the timid poetess we do not know, but presumably it was not without Emily's permission that Mrs. Hunt used her experiences in the last of the Saxe Holm stories, "Esther Wynn's Love Letters," which describe letters and poems revealing "the whole soul of a woman" like Emily Dickinson, and in the anonymous *Mercy Philbrick's Choice*. To people who knew Emily Dickinson, the novel seemed almost like the work of the poet herself. An anonymous writer to the *Springfield Republican* on July 25, 1878, suggested that the author was not Helen Hunt Jackson, as generally supposed, but another Amherst writer, Mrs. Mabel Loomis Todd, however, after a thorough investigation, decided that Emily did not write *Mercy Philbrick's Choice*, a conclusion supported by the internal evidence of style. But it is significant that Emily's friendship for Mrs. Jackson did not waver after the publication of these two apparently fictionized versions of her own biography. In 1878 Mrs. Jackson also published one of Emily's poems, "Success is Counted Sweetest," in an anthology, *A Masque of Poets*, though not without tampering with the diction. Possibly she hoped that interest in this poem would encourage her friend to stop concealing her genius. But if so, the stratagem failed, and Mrs. Jackson soon turned her attention to the American Indian, the subject for which she is best known.

Emily Dickinson's brother and sister and her few intimate friends knew that she had been composing poems for years, but after her death in 1886 Lavinia seems to have been astonished at the number of manuscripts which her sister had left. Many of the earlier poems had been tied together in little bundles of half a dozen sheets, but later compositions had been scratched down hurriedly with pencil on odd scraps of paper and tossed helter-skelter into a pile. Emily had left no instructions whatever for the disposition of these literary remains, but Lavinia was

determined to publish them as quickly as possible. She herself knew nothing whatever of editorial matters and realized that she must have assistance. To whom could she turn?

Next door was her sister-in-law, Susan Gilbert Dickinson. However, the fact that for years Austin had been fleeing from his own home to sanctuary with his sisters would not dispose Sue to help a member of the detested house. Despite this fact, Lavinia did apparently broach the subject to Mrs. Austin Dickinson, but aside from the family feud, Susan had literary ambitions for her daughter, Martha, and she thought that if anyone in the family was to be known as a poet, it should be her own daughter. Martha herself had written satirical skits about her "queer aunt Emily." Obviously no help could be found in this direction. Lavinia appealed to Colonel Higginson, but he pleaded lack of time, omitting to explain his lack of faith in the financial success of an edition of Emily's poems.

Finally, however, Lavinia discovered a potential editor in Mrs. Mabel Loomis Todd, the brilliant wife of a young instructor in astronomy at Amherst College. Mrs. Todd, realizing the work involved in deciphering, copying, and arranging the poems, was reluctant to accept so arduous a task, but she finally consented to undertake it with the assistance of Colonel Higginson. Consequently, in 1890 the first volume of *Poems by Emily Dickinson* was published by Roberts Brothers in Boston. Colonel Higginson wrote a Preface in which he stated that the selection of Miss Dickinson's poems was "published to meet the desire of her personal friends, and especially of her surviving sister." Probably no one was more surprised than he that the public liked them too. Mrs. Todd, therefore, began at once preparing a second selection, which was published the following year. Since the chronology of the poems was unknown, and could be only vaguely guessed at from the style of handwriting or the kind of paper used, Mrs. Todd arranged them by theme, about the only unity possible, and all later editors have loosely followed this precedent. The order in the first edition was: Life—Love—Nature—Time and Eternity. The editors made a few emendations, particularly to satisfy Colonel Higginson, but Mrs. Todd strove for as much accuracy as possible.

The sales of the two collections of *Poems* made a volume of letters seem desirable. With considerable difficulty, Mrs. Todd managed to secure enough letters for two volumes, which were published in 1894. Then she brought out a third collection of *Poems* in 1896. The *Letters* also contained 102 poems, and the

total published in 1896 (including those during Emily's lifetime and one released by Sue from manuscripts which Lavinia did not know she had) was 555. Then suddenly all publication ceased, until Martha Dickinson Bianchi, the niece who had written the satirical skits of her "queer aunt," brought out in 1914 a collection called *The Single Hound*. The story back of this hiatus in the publication of Emily Dickinson's remarkable literary remains was unknown to the public until 1945, when Mrs. Millicent Todd Bingham, daughter of the first editor, gave the surprising details in *Ancestors' Biocades*. For her hundreds of hours of work in editing the three collections of *Poems* Mrs. Todd received no compensation whatever, all royalties having gone to Lavinia Dickinson. Emily's brother, Austin, understanding the labor involved and Lavinia's greedy attitude, gave Mrs. Todd a small strip of land as a token payment. His sister signed the transfer of title, but after Austin's death in 1895 she chafed over the loss of family property. In 1898, perhaps under the instigation of her malicious sister-in-law, Lavinia brought suit to recover this insignificant piece of real estate. Stones were spread of intimacy between Mrs. Todd and the late Mr. Dickinson and the whole town took sides in the legal battle. At the trial in 1898 Lavinia gave conflicting and inconsistent testimony, but she won the lawsuit. Mrs. Todd, understandably, felt that she had been betrayed, and she promptly locked up the copies of the poems which she had made for future editions. Lavinia, who more than anyone else longed to have them published, knew no one to whom she could turn for further help. She herself died the following year, promising her friends that she would hide the poems where Sue could never find them.

It is most unfortunate that these ugly stories of jealousy and hatred are entangled with the biography of Emily Dickinson, but one cannot understand the confused text of her poems without knowing something of how it became so confused—and some critics also think that the charged atmosphere in which the poet herself lived may explain many of the puzzles in her own life. After Lavinia's death, Austin's family became the heirs of the manuscripts. No more poems were printed, however, until Susan Dickinson died in 1913. The following year her daughter, Martha (now Mrs. Alexander E. Bianchi), began a new series of publication. After *The Single Hound* in 1914 came *Life and Letters* in 1924. The copyright on Mrs. Todd's edition had lapsed and Mrs. Bianchi renewed it in her own name, and then unpardonably garbled the text. In 1924 Mrs. Bianchi also published what she called *Complete Poems*, though they were not

complete (even of poems hitherto published), and in 1929 she added another volume of *Further Poems*, supposedly recently discovered. Readers began to wonder how many poems still remained unpublished, and a partial answer came in 1936 with a new volume called *Unpublished Poems*. Some critics even asked whether all these "new" poems were genuine, but Mrs. Todd told her daughter that *Further Poems* were. Her daughter wondered how she knew that these poems were genuine, and that many had not been correctly printed. Mrs. Todd finally unlocked the copies of the manuscripts which had been in her possession before the lawsuit started, and her daughter began to learn for the first time why publication had ceased in 1896. Before Mrs. Todd's death she had managed to edit the *Letters*, restoring names deleted by request of the recipients and adding some passages which had also been withheld from the original edition. Mrs. Todd's revised and corrected *Letters of Emily Dickinson* was published in 1931 and is now the only authentic edition.

Mrs. Bingham found among her mother's copies of the original manuscripts several hundred poems which, for all Mrs. Bianchi's activities, had never been published. These she presented in 1945 in one of the finest collections we have, *Bolts of Melody*, containing 666 poems, including some fragments. Whether all of Emily Dickinson's poems are now in print is not known. Mrs. Bingham does not think so. Moreover, the manuscripts which Mrs. Bianchi used are not available to scholars for checking with the versions that have been printed. We probably have, therefore, the bulk of Emily Dickinson's total production, but unorganized, much of it unverified for accuracy, and most of it undated. In addition, the quality is uneven, but it will be time for sifting after a full and accurate text has been established. All members of the Dickinson family are now extinct, and perhaps in the course of time it will be possible for lovers of poetry to study Emily Dickinson as they are now able to study Chaucer or Spenser in reliable texts.

A final note needs to be added about Emily Dickinson's form. Early readers found her inaccurate rhymes and irregular lines puzzling. After *The Single Hound* appeared, Miss Amy Lowell's circle of free verse poets championed Emily Dickinson as a forerunner of their own experiments. But we now know that some of the unconventional structure in the Bianchi texts was due to incompetent editing. Emily's manuscripts must be a trial to any editor, and some of them are worse than that—especially those of the poet's later years, when she often wrote with a pencil on scraps of paper.

of odd sizes and shapes. Neither the punctuation (or lack of it) nor the line divisions are a safe guide to the pattern of the poem. On careful examination it will be discovered that the majority of the poems are in iambic meter, usually riming *abab* or *abcb*. Some of the poems which Mrs. Bianchi printed in irregular form can be rearranged in this conventional form, with obvious gain in clarity. It is true, however, that Emily was often satisfied with a faint approximation of a rhyme instead of a full rhyme, and it is particularly noticeable that the more ironic poems seem to strike something like a discord in the rhyme. There was probably a psychological reason for her variations from convention, as with John Donne or Gerard Manley

Hopkins, both of whom she resembles at times. Like Donne she wrote in a time of intellectual contradiction, pulled one way by faith and another by contemporary actuality. Emily Dickinson lived through the age of Emersonian optimism into the age of pessimism of Mark Twain and Henry Adams. Her links with Emerson were recognized by her earliest readers, but she also had much in common with Mark Twain, in her exaggerated metaphors, her ironic humor, and her keen sense of human frailty. Like Henry Adams, too, she sensed, in her own frustration, the shadow of a world tragedy. Despite her limited experience, Emily Dickinson was also a spokesman of nineteenth-century America.

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FROM

*Letters of Emily Dickinson*¹

[To Austin Dickinson]

[South Hadley, December 11, 1847]²

Saturday, P M

My Dear Brother Austin,—³ I finished my examination in Euclid last evening, and without a failure at any time You can easily imagine how glad I am to get through with four books, for you have finished the whole forever How are you all at home, and what are you doing this vacation? You are reading *Arabian Nights*, according to Viny's statement I hope you have derived much benefit from their perusal, and presume your powers of imagining will vastly increase thereby But I must give you a word of advice too Cultivate your other powers in proportion as you allow imagination to captivate you Am not I a very wise young lady?

I had almost forgotten to tell you what my studies are now—"better late than never" They are Chemistry, Physiology, and quarter course in Algebra I²⁰ have completed four studies already, and am getting along well Did you think that it was my birthday yesterday? I don't believe I am *seventeen*!

From your affectionate sister,

Emily

[South Hadley, about February 14 1848]

Thursday Morn

My dear Austin,—You will perhaps imagine from my date that I am quite at leisure, and can do what I please even in the forenoon, but one of our teachers, who is engaged, received a visit from her intended quite unexpectedly yesterday afternoon, and she has gone to her home to show him, I opine, and will be absent until Saturday As I happen to recite to her

in one of my studies, her absence gives me a little time in which to write

Your welcome letter found me all engrossed in the study of Sulphuric Acid! I deliberated for a few moments after its reception on the propriety of carrying it to Miss Whitman, your friend The result of my deliberation was a conclusion to open it with moderation, peruse its contents with sobriety becoming my station, and if after a close investigation of its contents I found nothing which savored of rebellion or an unsubdued will, I would lay it away in my folio, and forget I had ever received it Are you not gratified that I am so rapidly gaining correct ideas of female propriety and sedate deportment? After the proposed examination, finding it concealed no dangerous sentiments, I with great gravity deposited it with my other letters, and the impression that I once had such a letter is entirely obliterated by the waves of time

I have been quite lonely since I came back, but cheered by the thought that I am not to return another year,⁴ I take comfort, and still hope on My visit at home was happy, very happy to me, and had the idea of in so short a time returning been constantly in my dreams by night and day, I could not have been happier "There is no rose without a thorn" to me Home was always dear to me, and dearer still the friends around it, but never did it seem so dear as now All, all are kind to me, but their tones fall strangely on my ear, and their countenances meet mine not like home-faces, I can assure you most sincerely Then when tempted to feel sad, I think of the blazing fire and the cheerful meal and the chair empty now I am gone I can hear the cheerful voices and the merry laugh, and a desolate feeling comes

¹ *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Millicent Bingham and Mabel Loomis Todd Copyright 1931 by Millicent Bingham and Mabel Loomis Todd

The only prose of Emily Dickinson that has been preserved is her delightful letters As a result of the success of the first two volumes of *Poems* which she edited, Mrs Mabel Loomis Todd collected and published Emily's letters in two volumes in 1894 She deleted some names and passages at the request of the recipients of the letters In 1924 Mrs Martha Dickinson Bianchi renewed the copyright in her name and published a garbled text To provide an accurate text, and one which could now be corrected and enlarged by restoring many of the deleted passages, Mrs Todd published a new edition of the *Letters of Emily Dickinson*

in one volume in 1931 This is now the only authentic text Mrs Todd's daughter, Mrs Millicent Todd Bingham, has generously given permission for the reprinting of the letters included in these pages

² Miss Dickinson was attending Mount Holyoke Seminary (later Mount Holyoke College) and her brother, William Austin Dickinson, was a student at Amherst College

³ Mrs Todd explained Passages omitted from the letters to Austin are either those of little interest, or those which he requested me to omit Some of the latter he had himself erased from the manuscript before giving me the letters

⁴ Emily's father had decided that she was not strong enough for a second year at the Seminary

home to my heart, to think I am alone. But my good angel only waits to see the tears coming and then whispers, "Only this year! only twenty-two weeks more, and home again you will be to stay." To you, all busy and excited, I suppose the time flies faster, but to me slowly, very slowly, so that I can see his chariot wheels when they roll along, and himself is often visible. But I will no longer imagine, for your brain is full of *Arabian Nights'* fancies, and it will not do to pour fuel on your already kindled imagination.

I suppose you have written a few and received a quantity of valentines this week. Every night have I looked, and yet in vain, for one of Cupid's messengers. Many of the girls have received very beautiful ones, and I have not quite done hoping for one. Surely my friend *Thomas* has not lost all his former affection for me! I entreat you to tell him I am pining for a valentine. I am sure I shall not very soon forget last Valentine week, nor any the sooner the fun I had at that time. Probably Mary, Abby and Viny have received scores of them from the infatuated [k]nights in the neighborhood, while your *highly accomplished and gifted elder sister* is entirely overlooked. Monday afternoon Mistress Lyon arose in the hall, and forbade our sending "any of those foolish notes called valentines." But those who were here last year, knowing her opinions, were sufficiently cunning to write and give them into the care of D. during the vacation, so that about 150 were despatched on Valentine morn, before orders should be put down to the contrary effect. Hearing of this act, Miss Whitman, by and with the advice and consent of the other teachers, with frowning brow, sallied over to the Post Office to ascertain, if possible, the number of the valentines, and worse still, the names of the offenders. Nothing has yet been heard as to the amount of her information, but as D. is a good hand to help the girls, and no one has yet received sentence, we begin to think her mission unsuccessful. I have not written one, nor do I intend to.

Your injunction to pile on the wood has not been unheeded, for we have been obliged to obey it to keep from freezing up. I have had a severe cold for a few days, but think it is better now. We cannot have much more cold weather, I am sure, for spring is near.

Your affectionate sister,

Emily.

[South Hadley, late May, 1848]

Monday Morn

My dear Austin,—I received a letter from home on Saturday by Mr G—— S——, and father wrote in it that he intended to send for Cousin Emily and myself on Saturday of this week to spend the Sabbath at home. I went to Miss Whitman, after receiving the letter, and asked her if we could go if you decided to come for us. She seemed stunned by my request, and could not find utterance to an answer for some time. At length she said, "Did you not know it was contrary to the rules of the Seminary to ask to be absent on the Sabbath?" I told her I did not. She then took a catalogue from her table, and showed me the law in full at the last part of it. She closed by saying that we could not go, and I returned to my room without farther ado. So you see I shall be deprived of the pleasure of a visit home, and you that of seeing me, if I may have the presumption to call it a pleasure! The teachers are not willing to let the girls go home this term as it is the last one, and as I have only nine weeks more to spend here, we had better be contented to obey the commands. We shall only be the more glad to see one another after a longer absence, that will be all. I was highly edified with your imaginative note to me, and think your flights of fancy indeed wonderful at your age! When are you coming to see me—it would be very pleasant to us to receive a visit from your highness if you can be absent from home long enough for such a purpose. . . I can't write longer.

Your affectionate sister,

Emilie.⁵

[June 14, 1853.]

. . . We have been free from company by the "Amherst and Belchertown Railroad" since J. went home, though we live in constant fear of some other visitation. "Oh, would some power the giftie gie" folks to see themselves as we see them.—*Burns*.

I have read the poems, Austin, and am going to read them again. . . . They please me very much, but I must read them again before I know just what I think of "Alexander Smith." They are not very coherent, but there's a good deal of exquisite frenzy, and some wonderful figures as ever I met in my life. We will talk about it again. The grove looks nicely.

⁵ During this period Emily Dickinson often (though not consistently) signed her name thus.

Austin, and we think must certainly grow We love to go there—it is a charming place Everything is singing now, and everything is beautiful that *can* be in its life The time for the New London trip has not been fixed upon I sincerely wish it may wait until you get home from Cambridge if you would like to go

The cars continue thriving⁶—a good many passengers seem to arrive from somewhere, though nobody knows from where Father expects his new buggy to arrive by the cars every day now, and that will help a little I expect all our grandfathers and all their country cousins will come here to spend Commencement⁷ and don't doubt the stock will rise several per cent that week If we children could obtain board for the week in some "vast wilderness," I think we should have good times Our house is crowded daily with the members of this world, the high and the low, the bond and the free, the "poor in this world's goods," and the "almighty dollar,"⁸ and what in the world they are after continues to be unknown But I hope they will pass away as insects or vegetation, and let us reap together in golden harvest time [You and I] and our sister Vinnie must have a pleasant time to be unmolested together when your school days end⁹ You must come home from school, not stopping to play by the way We all send our love to you, and miss you very much, and think of seeing you again very much Write me again soon I have said a good deal to-day

Emilie

[To Mr and Mrs Bowles]⁹

[December, 1859]

Amherst

I should like to thank dear Mrs Bowles for the little book, except my cheek is red with shame be-

⁶ Emily's father had helped to bring the railroad to Amherst. The first trip from Palmer to Amherst was made May 9, 1853, and early in June a celebration was held at Amherst, attended by three hundred visitors from New London.

⁷ The College commencement, held in August, was one of the two biggest local events of the year—rivaled only by the Stock Show in the fall.

⁸ Austin was studying law at Harvard in 1853-54.

⁹ Samuel Bowles was son of the founder and editor of the *Springfield Republican*. He succeeded to ownership after his father's death in 1851, and under his own editorship the paper assumed national importance. Emily was one of its constant, enthusiastic readers.—Mrs Todd. The poet began corresponding with Mr and Mrs Bowles in 1858 and continued for over a quarter of a century. She often enclosed poems in her letters, perhaps a substitute for publication.

cause I write so often Even the "lilies of the field"¹⁰ have their dignities

Why did you bind it in green and gold? The *immortal* colors I take it for an emblem I never read before what Mr Parker¹¹ wrote

I heard that he was "poison" Then I like poison very well Austin stayed from service yesterday afternoon, and I found him reading my Christmas gift I wish the "faith of the fathers" didn't wear brogans, and carry blue umbrellas I give you all "New Year!" I think you kept gay Christmas, from the friend's account, and can only sigh with one not present at "John Gilpin,"¹² "and when he next doth ride a race," etc You picked your berries from my holly Grasping Mrs Bowles!

Today is very cold, yet have I much bouquet upon the window pane of moss and fern I call them saints' flowers, because they do not romp as other flowers do, but stand so still and white

The snow is very tall, which makes the trees so low that they tumble my hair, when I cross the bridge

I think there will be no spring this year, the flowers are gone so far Let us have spring in our heart, and never mind the orchises! Please have my love, mother's, and Vinnie's Carlo sends a brown kiss, and pussy a gray and white one, to each of the children

Please, now I write so often, make lamplighter of me, then I shall not have lived in vain

Dear Mrs Bowles, dear Mr Bowles, dear Sally—Sam and Mamie, now all shut your eyes, while I do benediction!

Lovingly,

Emily

[To Col T W Higginson]¹³

[April 15, 1862]

Mr Higginson,—Are you too deeply occupied to say if my verse is alive?

The mind is so near itself it cannot see distinctly, and I have none to ask

¹⁰ Cf. Matthew iv 28

¹¹ Theodore Parker, liberal theologian and preacher

¹² John Gilpin, a ballad by William Cowper

¹³ Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823-1911) was a Unitarian minister, leader of a Negro regiment in the Civil War, and a popular author of novels, sketches, and criticism. Emily Dickinson shyly begged his appraisal of her poems, but she never took his advice to conventionalize her diction, rhythm and rhyme. Probably she needed an audience more than a tutor, though she may not have realized that this was a hidden motive in her seeking Col Higginson's advice. That she made a poor choice in her mentor is generally conceded by modern critics.

Should you think it breathed, and had you the leisure to tell me, I should feel quick gratitude

If I make the mistake, that you dared to tell me would give me sincerer honor toward you

I enclose my name, asking you, if you please, sir, to tell me what is true?

That you will not betray me it is needless to ask, since honor is its own pawn¹⁴

[April 25, 1862]

Mr Higginson,—Your kindness claimed earlier gratitude, but I was ill, and write today from my pillow

Thank you for the surgery, it was not so painful as I supposed I bring you others,¹⁵ as you ask, though they might not differ While my thought is undressed, I can make the distinction, but when I put them in the gown, they look alike and numb

You asked how old I was? I made no verse, but one or two, until this winter, sir

I had a terror since September, I could tell to none,¹⁶ and so I sing, as the boy does of the burying ground, because I am afraid.

You inquire my books For poets, I have Keats, and Mr and Mrs Browning For prose, Mr Ruskin, Sir Thomas Browne, and the *Revelations* I went to school, but in your manner of the phrase had no education When a little girl, I had a friend¹⁷ who taught me Immortality, but venturing too near, himself, he never returned Soon after, my tutor¹⁸ died, 30 and for several years my lexicon was my only companion Then I found one more, but he was not contented I be his scholar, so he left the land.¹⁹

You ask of my companions. Hills, sir, and the sun-down, and a dog large as myself, that my father bought me. They are better than beings because they

¹⁴ The poems enclosed were: "Safe in their alabaster chambers," "I'll tell you how the sun rose," "We play at paste," "The nearest dream recedes unrealized."

¹⁵ Poems enclosed "Your riches taught me poverty," "A bird came down the walk" In all her letters Emily sent Col Higginson nearly fifty poems, which he enjoyed, with reservations, but did not think a volume of them would sell

¹⁶ Thought to be an allusion to Emily's secret love for Reverend Charles Wadsworth—see introductory essay, above

¹⁷ Probably Benjamin Franklin Newton, a law student in Edward Dickinson's law office who died in 1853 See introductory essay, above

¹⁸ Identified as Leonard Humphrey, actually one of Emily's teachers, who also died in 1853

¹⁹ The Reverend Wadsworth did not depart for San Francisco until a few weeks after this letter was written, but some biographers think she anticipated the event because she knew it was imminent

know, but do not tell, and the noise in the pool at noon excels my piano

I have a brother and sister, my mother does not care for thought, and father, too busy with his briefs to notice what we do He buys me many books, but begs me not read them, because he fears they joggle the mind They are religious, except me, and address an eclipse, every morning, whom they call their "Father"

10 But I fear my story fatigues you. I would like to learn. Could you tell me how to grow, or is it unconveyed, like melody or witchcraft?

You speak of Mr Whitman I never read his book [*Leaves of Grass*], but was told that he was disgraceful.

I read Miss Prescott's *Circumstance*,²⁰ but it followed me in the dark, so I avoided her.

Two editors of journals²¹ came to my father's house this winter, and asked me for my mind, and 20 when I asked them "why" they said I was penurious, and they would use it for the world

I could not weigh myself, myself. My size felt small to me. I read your chapters in *The Atlantic*,²² and experienced honor for you I was sure you would not reject a confiding question.

Is this, sir, what you asked me to tell you?

Your friend,

E Dickinson

[June 7, 1862]

Dear Friend,—Your letter gave no drunkenness, because I tasted rum before. Domingo comes but once; yet I have had few pleasures so deep as your opinion, and if I tried to thank you, my tears would block my tongue

My dying tutor told me that he would like to live till I had been a poet,²³ but Death was much of mob as I could master, then. And when, far afterward, a sudden light on orchards, or a new fashion in the wind troubled my attention. I felt a palsy, here, the verses just relieve

²⁰ Harnet Prescott Spofford (1835-1921), whose reputation began in February, 1859, with her story in the *Atlantic Monthly*, "In a Cellar." She wrote Gothic or Poesque romances, noted for their vivid description

²¹ Undoubtedly Dr J G. Holland and Samuel Bowles, editors of the *Springfield Republican*. Two of Emily Dickinson's poems had been published in this newspaper, a version of the poem, "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers" (date undetermined), and a youthful valentine, printed February 20, 1852

²² "Letter to a Young Contributor," April, 1862

²³ "Tutor" may be metaphorical, referring to "Ben" Newton rather than Leonard Humphrey.

Your second letter suprised me and for a moment, swung I had not supposed it Your first gave no dishonor, because the true are not ashamed I thanked you for your justice, but could not drop the bells whose jingling cooled my tramp Perhaps the balm seemed better, because you bled me first I smile when you suggest that I delay "to publish," that being foreign to my thought as firmament to fin

If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her, if she did not, the longest day would pass me on the chase, and the approbation of my dog would forsake me then My barefoot rank is better

You think my gait 'spasmodic' I am in danger, sir You think me "uncontrolled" I have no tribunal

Would you have time to be the "friend" you should think I need? I have a little shape, it would not crowd your desk, nor make much racket as the mouse that dents your galleries

If I might bring you what I do—not so frequent to trouble you—and ask you if I told it clear, 'twould be control to me The sailor cannot see the north, but knows the needle can The "hand you stretch me in the dark" I put mine in, and turn away I have no Saxon now ²⁴

But, will you be my preceptor, Mr Higginson?

Your friend,

E Dickinson

[July, 1862]

Could you believe me without? ²⁵ I had no portrait, now, but am small, like the wren, and my hair is bold, like the chestnut burr, and my eyes, like the sherry in the glass that the guest leaves Would this do just as well?

It often alarms father He says death might occur, and he has molds of all the rest, but has no mold of me, but I noticed the quick wore off those things in a few days, and forestall ²⁶ the dishonor You will think no caprice of me

You said "dark" I know the butterfly, and the lizard, and the orchis Are not those *your* country ²⁷ men?

I am happy to be your scholar, and will deserve the kindness I cannot repay

If you truly consent, I recite now Will you tell me my fault, frankly, as to yourself, for I had rather

²⁴ The poem, beginning As if I asked a common alms," omitted

²⁵ Mr Higginson had evidently asked for a photograph

²⁶ The subject of 'forestall' is I understood

winced than die Men do not call the surgeon to commend the bone, but to set it, sir, and fracture within is more critical And for this, preceptor I shall bring you obedience, the blossom from my garden, and every gratitude I know

Perhaps you smile at me I could not stop for that My business is circumference An ignorance, not of customs, but if caught with the dawn, or the sunset see me, myself the only kangaroo among the beauty, sir, if you please, it afflicts me, and I thought that instruction would take it away

Because you have much business, beside the growth of me, you will appoint, yourself, how often I shall come without your inconvenience

And if at any time you regret you received me, or I prove a different fabric to that you supposed, you must banish me

When I state myself, as the representative of the verse, it does not mean me, but a supposed person ²⁷ You are true about the "perfection" Today makes yesterday mean

You spoke of *Pippa Passes* I never heard anybody speak of *Pippa Passes* before You see my posture is benighted

To thank you baffles me Are you perfectly powerful? Had I a pleasure you had not, I could delight to bring it

Your Scholar

[1862]

Dear Friend,—Are these more orderly? ²⁸ I thank you for the truth

I had no monarch in my life, and cannot rule myself, and when I try to organize, my little force explodes and leaves me bare and charred

I think you called me "wayward" Will you help me improve?

I suppose the pride that stops the breath, in the core of woods, is not of ourself

You say I confess the little mistake, and omit the large Because I can see orthography, but the ignorance out of sight is my preceptor's charge

²⁷ An attempt to disguise the love poems?

²⁸ Col Higginson's testimony It would seem that at first I tried a little—a very little—to lead her in the direction of rules and traditions, but I fear it was only perfunctory, and that she interested me more in her—so to speak—unregenerate condition Still, she recognizes the endeavor In this case, as will be seen I called her attention to the fact that while she took pains to correct the spelling of a word, she was utterly careless of greater irregularities It will be seen by her answer that with her usual naive adroitness she turns my point

Of "shunning men and women,"—they talk of hallowed things, aloud, and embarrass my dog He and I don't object to them, if they'll exist their side. I think Carl[o] would please you He is dumb, and brave I think you would like the chestnut-tree I met in my walk It hit my notice suddenly, and I thought the skies were in blossom.

Then there's a noiseless noise in the orchard that I let persons hear

You told me in one letter you could not come to¹⁰ see me "now," and I made no answer, not because I had none, but did not think myself the price that you should come so far.

I do not ask so large a pleasure, lest you might deny me

You say, "Beyond your knowledge" You would not jest with me, because I believe you, but, preceptor, you cannot mean it?

All men say "What" to me, but I thought it a fashion

When much in the woods, as a little girl, I was told that the snake would bite me, that I might pick a poisonous flower, or goblins kidnap me; but I went along and met no one but angels, who were far shyer of me than I could be of them, so I haven't that confidence in fraud which many exercise,

I shall observe your precept, though I don't understand it, always.

I marked a line in one verse, because I met it after I made it, and never consciously touch a paint mixed³⁰ by another person I do not let go it, because it is mine.

Have you the portrait of Mrs. Browning? Persons sent me three. If you had none, will you have mine?
Your Scholar.

Amherst.

[Early in 1863]²⁹

Dear Friend,—I did not deem that planetary forces annulled, but suffered an exchange of territory,⁴⁰ or world.

I should have liked to see you before you became improbable. War feels to me an oblique place, Should there be other summers, would you perhaps come?

I found you were gone, by accident, as I find systems are, or seasons of the year, and obtain no cause, but suppose it a treason of progress that dis-

solves as it goes Carlo still remained, and I told him

Best gains must have the losses' test,
To constitute them gains.

My shaggy ally assented.

Perhaps death gave me awe for friends, striking sharp and early, for I held them since in a brittle love, of more alarm than peace. I trust you may pass the limit of war, and though not reared to prayer, when service is had in church for our arms, I include myself

I, too, have an "island" whose 'Rose and Magnolia' are in the egg, and its "Blackberry" but a spicy prospective, yet as you say, "fascination" is absolute of clime.

I was thinking today, as I noticed, that the "supernatural" was only the natural disclosed.

Not "Revelation" 'tis that waits,
But our unfurnished eyes

But I fear I detain you. Should you, before this reaches you, experience Immortality, who will inform me of the exchange? Could you, with honor, avoid death, I entreat you, sir. It would bereave

Your Gnome.

I trust the *Procession of Flowers* was not a premonition.

Amherst.

[June, 1867]

Dear Friend,—A letter always feels to me like immortality because it is the mind alone without corporeal friend Indebted in our talk to attitude and accent, there seems a spectral power in thought that walks alone. I would like to thank you for your great kindness, but never try to lift the words which I cannot hold

Should you come to Amherst, I might then succeed, though gratitude is the timid wealth of those who have nothing I am sure that you speak the truth, because the noble do, but your letters always surprise me.

My life has been too simple and stern to embarrass any. "Seen of angels," scarcely my responsibility.

It is difficult not to be fictitious in so fair a place, but tests' severe repairs are permitted all.

When a little girl I remember hearing that remarkable passage and preferring the "power," not

²⁹ Written to Col Higginson while he was in camp in South Carolina He was in command of a Negro regiment.

knowing at the time that "kingdom" and "glory" were included³⁰

You noticed my dwelling alone To an emigrant, country is idle except it be his own You speak kindly of seeing me, could it please your convenience to come so far as Amherst, I should be very glad, but I do not cross my father's ground to any house or town

Of our greatest acts we are ignorant You were not aware that you saved my life To thank you in person has been since then one of my few requests

The child that asks my flower, "Will you," he says, "will you" And so to ask for what I want I know no other way You will excuse each that I say, because no other taught me?

Dickinson

Bringing still my "plea for culture" Would it teach me now?

[Col Higginson's Diary Note]

[August 16, 1870]³¹

To Amherst, arrived there at 2 Saw Prest Stearns, Mrs Banfield and Miss Dickinson (twice) A remarkable experience, quite equalling my expectations

A pleasant country town, unspeakably quiet in the summer afternoon

[Col Higginson to Mrs Higginson]

Aug 16, 1870
Amherst, Tuesday,
10 P M

I shan't sit up tonight to write you all about E D, dearest, but if you had read Mrs Stoddard's³² novels you could understand a house where each member runs his or her own selves Yet I only saw her

A large country lawyer's house, brown brick, with great trees and a garden I sent up my card A parlor dark and cool and stuffish, a few books and engravings and an open piano—Malbone and O D [Out Door] Papers among other books

A step like a pattering child's in entry and in glided⁴⁰ a little plain woman with two smooth bands of reddish hair and a face a little like Bell Dove's, not

³⁰ Cf Matthew vi 9

³¹ Col Higginson arrived in Amherst on this date, and recorded his impressions in this diary entry and two letters to his wife

³² Elizabeth Drew [Barstow] Stoddard (1823-1902), wife of Richard Henry Stoddard, wrote realistic novels of New England life—not popular because they were too grim

plainer, with no good feature—in a very plain and exquisitely clean white piqué and a blue net worsted shawl She came to me with two day lilies, which she put in a sort of childlike way into my hand and said, "These are my introduction," in a soft, frightened, breathless, childlike voice—and added under her breath, "Forgive me if I am frightened, I never see strangers and hardly know what I say"—but she talked soon and thenceforward continuously—and¹⁰ deferentially—sometimes stopping to ask me to talk instead of her—but readily recommencing Manner between Angie Tilton and Mr Alcott, but thoroughly ingenuous and simple—which they are not, and saying many things which you would have thought foolish and I wise—and some things you would have liked I add a few over the page

I got here at two and leave at nine E D dreamed all night of you (not me) and next day got my letter proposing to come here!¹¹ She only knew of you²⁰ through a mention in my notice of Charlotte Hawes

[Emily Dickinson's Sayings]

"Women talk, men are silent That is why I dread women"

"My father only reads on Sunday He reads *lonely* and *rigorous* books"

"If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know *that* is poetry If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry These are the only³⁰ ways I know it Is there any other way?"

"How do most people live without any thoughts? There are many people in the world (you must have noticed them in the street), how do they live? How do they get strength to put on their clothes in the morning?"

"When I lost the use of my eyes³³ it was a comfort to think there were so few real books that I could easily find someone to read me all of them"

"Truth is such a rare thing, it is delightful to tell it"

"I find ecstasy in living, the mere sense of living is joy enough" I asked if she never felt want of employment, never going off the place, and never seeing any visitor

³³ During the summer of 1864 and again in 1865 Emily Dickinson made two prolonged trips to Boston for treatment of her eyes

"I never thought of conceiving that I could ever have the slightest approach to such a want in all future time," and added, "I feel that I have not expressed myself strongly enough"

She makes all the bread, for her father only likes hers and says, "and people must have puddings," this very dreamily as if they were comets, so she makes them.

August 17, 1870.

Wednesday noon 10

. . . This morning at nine I left Amherst and sent you a letter last night I shall mail this at Littleton, putting with it another sheet about E. D. that is in my valise

She said to me at parting, "Gratitude is the only secret that cannot reveal itself."

I talked with President Stearns of Amherst about her and found him a very pleasant companion in the cars . . . I saw Mr. Dickinson this morning a little, —thin, dry and speechless I saw what her life has 20 been Dr. Stearns says her sister is proud of her. . . . This picture of Mrs. Browning's tomb is from E. D. "Timothy Titcomb" ³⁴ gave it to her.

'E. D. again "Could you tell me what home is?" "I never had a mother I suppose a mother is one to whom you hurry when you are troubled"

"I never knew how to tell time by the clock till I was fifteen My father thought he had taught me, but I did not understand and I was afraid to say I did not and afraid to ask anyone else lest he should 30 know."

—Her father was not severe, I should think, but remote. He did not wish them to read anything but the Bible. One day her brother brought home *Kavanagh*,³⁵ hid it under the piano cover and made signs to her and they read it. Her father at last found it and was displeased. Perhaps it was before this that a student of his was amazed that they had never heard of Mrs. Child ³⁶ and used to bring them books and hide in a bush by the door. They were then little 40 things in short dresses with their feet on the rungs of the chair After the first book she thought in ecstasy, "This then is a book! And there are more of them."

³⁴ Pseudonym used by Josiah Gilbert Holland in such works as *Letters to Young People* (1858)

³⁵ A romantic novel by Longfellow, published in 1849.

³⁶ Lydia Maria Child (1802–80) wrote local color stories of New England characters

"Is it oblivion or absorption when things pass from our minds?"

Major Hunt ³⁷ interested her more than any man she ever saw She remembered two things he said, that her great dog "understood gravitation," and when he said he should come again "in a year If I say a shorter time it will be longer"

When I said I would come again *sometime* she said, "Say in a long time, that will be nearer Sometime is nothing"

After long disuse of her eyes she read Shakespeare and thought, "Why is any other book needed?"

I never was with anyone who drained my nerve power so much Without touching her she drew from me I am glad not to live near her.

She often thought me *tired*, and seemed very thoughtful of others.

[To Col. Higginson]

[September 26, 1870]

Enough is so vast a sweetness, I suppose it never occurs, only pathetic counterfeits

Fabulous to me as the men of the *Revelations* who "shall not hunger any more."³⁸ Even the possible has its insoluble particle

After you went, I took Macbeth and turned to "Birnam Woods" Came *twice* "to Dunsinane."³⁹ I thought and went about my work. I remember your coming as serious sweetness placed now with the un-
real

Trust adjusts her "peradventure"
Phantoms entered "and not you"

The vein cannot thank the artery, but her solemn indebtedness to him, even the stolidest admit, and so of me who try, whose effort leaves no sound.

You ask great questions accidentally. To answer them would be events. I trust that you are safe.

I ask you to forgive me for all the ignorance I had. I find no nomination sweet as your low opinion.

Speak, if but to blame your obedient child
—You told me of Mrs. Lowell's poems.⁴⁰ Would you

³⁷ The first husband of Helen Hunt Jackson, Emily Dickinson's home-town friend. Major Hunt was killed while experimenting with a military land mine.

³⁸ Revelation vii:16

³⁹ That is, from Act IV, Scene i to VI, vi.

⁴⁰ Maria White Lowell (1821–53), wife of James Russell Lowell, who edited twenty of her poems in 1855

tell me where I could find them, or are they not for sight? An article of yours, too, perhaps the only one you wrote that I never knew. It was about a "Latch." Are you willing to tell me? ⁴¹

If I ask too much, you could please refuse. Shortness to live has made me bold.

Abroad is close tonight and I have but to lift my hands to touch the "Heights of Abraham." ⁴²

Dickinson

FROM

Poems

FIRST SERIES ⁴³

*This is my letter to the world,
That never wrote to me,—
The simple news that Nature told,
With tender majesty*

*Her message is committed
To hands I cannot see,
For love of her, sweet countrymen,
Judge tenderly of me!*

I *Life*

I *Success* ⁴⁴

Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need
Not one of all the purple host
Who took the flag to day
Can tell the definition,
So clear, of victory,
As he, defeated, dying,
On whose forbidden ear

The distant strains of triumph
Break, agonized and clear

V

Glee! the great storm is over!
Four have recovered the land,
Forty gone down together
Into the boiling sand
Ring, for the scant salvation!
Toll, for the bonnie souls,—
Neighbor and friend and bridegroom,
Spinning upon the shoals!

10

How they will tell the shipwreck
When winter shakes the door,
Till the children ask, "But the forty?
Did they come back no more?"

10

Then a silence suffuses the story,
And a softness the teller's eye,
And the children no further question,
And only the waves reply

VIII

A wounded deer leaps highest,
I've heard the hunter tell,
'Tis but the ecstasy of death,
And then the brake is still

⁴¹ Perhaps *A Shadow* [Mrs Todd]

⁴² Cf. Luke xvi 23

⁴³ *Poems by Emily Dickinson* edited by two of her friends, Mabel Loomis Todd and T. W. Higginson Boston, 1890

The poems reprinted here from the first edition present Emily Dickinson's poetry as it was first introduced to the public in 1890. Chronological arrangement being impossible, Mrs. Todd and Mr. Higginson indexed the poems by subject in four books, Life Love Nature Time and Eternity, a scheme followed in succeeding editions. Though other groupings might be equally satisfactory, this at least serves to emphasize the major themes in Emily Dickinson's work. The first editors picked out poems which they hoped would create an audience for this posthumous poetry, but on the whole this first collection was representative rather than selective. It still stands as a fair sample of Emily Dickinson's work. Miss Dickinson left most of her poems without titles.

⁴⁴ Published in "A Masque of Poets" at the request of "H. H., the author's fellow townsman and friend [Mrs. Todd's note]. The editor was Mrs. Helen Hunt, later Helen Hunt Jackson.

The smitten rock that gushes,
The trampled steel that springs.
A cheek is always redder
Just where the hectic stings!

Mirth is the mail of anguish,
In which it cautious arm,
Lest anybody spy the blood
And "You're hurt" exclaim!

X In a Library

A precious, mouldering pleasure 't is
To meet an antique book,
In just the dress his century wore,
A privilege, I think,

His venerable hand to take,
And warming in our own,
A passage back, or two, to make
To times when he was young

His quaint opinions to inspect,
His knowledge to unfold
On what concerns our mutual mind,
The literature of old;

What interested scholars most,
What competitions ran
When Plato was a certainty,
And Sophocles a man;

When Sappho was a living girl,
And Beatrice wore
The gown that Dante deified
Facts, centuries before,

He traverses familiar,
As one should come to town
And tell you all your dreams were true:
He lived where dreams were sown.

His presence is enchantment,
You beg him not to go.
Old volumes shake their vellum heads
And tantalize, just so

XI

Much madness is divinest sense
To a discerning eye,
Much sense the starkest madness.
'T is the majority
In this, as all, prevails.

Assent, and you are sane;
Demur,—you're straightway dangerous,
And handled with a chain

XII

10 I asked no other thing,
No other was denied
I offered Being for it,
The mighty merchant smiled.

Brazil? He twirled a button.
Without a glance my way
"But, madam, is there nothing else
That we can show to-day?"

XIII Exclusion

The soul selects her own society,
Then shuts the door,
On her divine majority
Obtrude no more

10 Unmoved, she notes the chariot's pausing
At her low gate,
Unmoved, an emperor is kneeling
Upon her mat

I've known her from an ample nation
Choose one,
10 Then close the valves of her attention
Like stone

XIV. The Secret

Some things that fly there be,—
Birds, hours, the bumble-bee
Of these no elegy.

Some things that stay there be,—
Grief, hills, eternity:
Nor this behooveth me.

20 There are, that resting, rise.
Can I expound the skies?
How still the riddle lies!

XVI

To fight aloud is very brave,
But gallanter, I know,
Who charge within the bosom,
The cavalry of woe

Who win, and nations do not see,
Who fall, and none observe,

Whose dying eyes no country
Regards with patriot love

We trust, in plumed procession,
For such the angels go,
Rank after rank, with even feet
And uniforms of snow

XIX The Mystery of Pain

Pain has an element of blank,
It cannot recollect
When it began, or if there were
A day when it was not

It has no future but itself
Its infinite realms contain
Its past, enlightened to perceive
New periods of pain

XX

I taste a liquor never brewed,
From tankards scooped in pearl,
Not all the vats upon the Rhine
Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchee of dew,
Reeling, through endless summer days,
From inns of molten blue

When landlords turn the drunken bee
Out of the foxglove's door,
When butterflies renounce their drams,
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tippler
Leaning against the sun!

XXI A Book

He ate and drank the precious words,
His spirit grew robust,
He knew no more that he was poor,
Nor that his frame was dust
He danced along the dingy days,
And thus bequest of wings
Was but a book What liberty
A loosened spirit brings!

XXII

I had no time to hate, because
The grave would hinder me,
And life was not so ample I
Could finish enmity

Nor had I time to love, but since
Some industry must be,
The little toil of love, I thought,
Was large enough for me

XXV

Belshazzar had a letter,⁴⁵—
He never had but one,
Belshazzar's correspondent
Concluded and begun
In that immortal copy
The conscience of us all
Can read without its glasses
On revelation's wall

XXVI

The brain within its groove
Runs evenly and true,
But let a splinter swerve,
'T were easier for you
To put the water back
When floods have slit the hills,
And scooped a turnpike for themselves,
And blotted out the mills!

II Love

I Mine

Mine by the right of the white election!
Mine by the royal seal!
Mine by the sign in the scarlet prison
Bars cannot conceal!

Mine, here in vision and in veto!
Mine, by the grave's repeal
Titled, confirmed,—delirious charter!
Mine, while the ages steal!

II Bequest

You left me, sweet, two legacies,—
A legacy of love

⁴⁵ Cf. Daniel v. 4.

A Heavenly Father would content,
Had He the offer of,
You left me boundaries of pain
Capacious as the sea,
Between eternity and time,
Your consciousness and me.

III

Alter? When the hills do
Falter? When the sun
Question if his glory
Be the perfect one

Surfeit? When the daffodil
Doth of the dew
Even as herself, O friend!
I will of you!

IV Suspense

Elysium is as far as to
The very nearest room,
If in that room a friend await
Felicity or doom.

What fortitude the soul contains,
That it can so endure
The accent of a coming foot
The opening of a door!

VI

If you were coming in the fall,
I'd brush the summer by
With half a smile and half a spurn,
As housewives do a fly

If I could see you in a year,
I'd wind the months in balls,
And put them each in separate drawers,
Until their time befalls.

If only centuries delayed,
I'd count them on my hand,
Subtracting till my fingers dropped
Into Van Diemen's ⁴⁶ land.

If certain, when this life was out,
That yours and mine should be,
I'd toss it yonder like a rind,
And taste eternity.

⁴⁶ Former name of Tasmania, an island south of Australia.

But now, all ignorant of the length
Of time's uncertain wing,
It goads me, like the goblin bee,
That will not state its sting.

20

VII With a Flower

I hide myself within my flower,
That wearing on your breast,
You, unsuspecting, wear me too—
And angels know the rest

I hide myself within my flower,
That, fading from your vase,
You, unsuspecting, feel for me
Almost a loneliness

VIII Proof

That I did always love,
I bring thee proof:
That till I loved
I did not love enough

That I shall love away,
I offer thee
That love is life,
And life hath immortality

This, dost thou doubt, sweet?
Then have I
Nothing to show
But Calvary

10

IX

Have you got a brook in your little heart,
Where bashful flowers blow,
And blushing birds go down to drink,
And shadows tremble so?

And nobody knows, so still it flows,
That any brook is there;
And yet your little draught of life
Is daily drunken there

Then look out for the little brook in March,
When the rivers overflow,
And the snows come hurrying from the hills,
And the bridges often go.

10

And later, in August it may be,
When the meadows parching lie,
Beware, lest this little brook of life
Some burning noon go dry!

XI The Outlet

My river runs to thee
Blue sea, wilt welcome me?

My river waits reply
Oh sea, look graciously!

I'll fetch the brooks
From spotted nooks,—

Say, sea,
Take me!

XII In Vain

I cannot live with you,
It would be life,
And life is over there
Behind the shelf

The sexton keeps the key to,
Putting up
Our life, his porcelain,
Like a cup

Discarded of the housewife,
Quaint or broken,
A newer Sèvres pleases,
Old ones crack

I could not die with you,
For one must wait
To shut the other's gaze down,—
You could not

And I, could I stand by
And see you freeze,
Without my right of frost,
Death's privilege?

Nor could I rise with you,
Because your face
Would put out Jesus',
That new grace

Glow plain and foreign
On my homesick eye,
Except that you, than he
Shone closer by

They'd judge us—how?
For you served Heaven, you know,
Or sought to,
I could not,

Because you saturated sight,
And I had no more eyes
For sordid excellence
As Paradise

And were you lost, I would be,
Though my name
Rang loudest
On the heavenly fame

And were you saved,
And I condemned to be
Where you were not,
That self were hell to me

So we must keep apart,
You there, I here,
With just the door ajar
That oceans are,
And prayer,
And that pale sustenance,
Despair!

XIII Renunciation

There came a day at summer's full
Entirely for me,
I thought that such were for the saints,
Where revelations be

The sun, as common, went abroad,
The flowers, accustomed, blew,
As if no soul the solstice passed
That maketh all things new

The time was scarce profaned by speech,
The symbol of a word
Was needless, as at sacrament
The wardrobe of our Lord

Each was to each the sealed church,
Permitted to commune this time,
Lest we too awkward show
At supper of the Lamb ⁴⁷

The hours slid fast, as hours will,
Clutched tight by greedy hands,
So faces on two decks look back,
Bound to opposing lands

And so, when all the time had failed,
Without external sound,

⁴⁷ Exodus xii

Each bound the other's crucifix,
We gave no other bond

Sufficient troth that we shall rise—
Deposed, at length, the grave—
To that new marriage, justified
Through Calvaries of Love!

XIV Love's Baptism

I 'm ceded, I 've stopped being theirs,
The name they dropped upon my face
With water, in the country church,
Is finished using now,
And they can put it with my dolls,
My childhood, and the string of spools
I 've finished threading too

Baptized before without the choice,
But this time consciously, of grace
Unto supremest name,
10 Called to my full, the crescent dropped,
Existence's whole arc filled up
With one small diadem.

My second rank, too small the first,
Crowned, crowing on my father's breast,
A half unconscious queen;
But this time, adequate, erect,
With will to choose or to reject,
And I choose—just a throne.

XV. Resurrection

'T was a long parting, but the time
For interview had come;
Before the judgment-seat of God,
The last and second time

These fleshless lovers met,
A heaven in a gaze,
A heaven of heavens, the privilege
Of one another's eyes

No lifetime set on them,
Apparelled as the new
Unborn, except they had beheld,
Born everlasting now.

Was bridal e'er like this?
A paradise, the host,
And cherubim and seraphim
The most familiar guest.

XVI Apocalypsc

I 'm wife, I 've finished that,
That other state;
I 'm Czar, I 'm woman now:
It 's safer so

How odd the girl's life looks
Behind this soft eclipse!
I think that earth seems so
To those in heaven now

This being comfort, then
That other kind was pain,
But why compare?
I 'm wife! stop there!

10

XVII The Wife

She rose to his requirement, dropped
The playthings of her life
To take the honorable work
Of woman and of wife.

If aught she missed in her new day
Of amplitude, or awe,
Or first prospective, or the gold
In using wore away,

It lay unmentioned, as the sea
Develops pearl and weed,
But only to himself is known
The fathoms they abide.

10

XVIII. Apotheosis

Come slowly, Eden!
Lips unused to thee,
Bashful, sip thy jasmynes,
As the fainting bee,

Reaching late his flower,
Round her chamber hums,
Counts his nectars—enters,
And is lost in balms!

10

III Nature

I

New feet within my garden go,
New fingers stir the sod;
A troubadour upon the elm
Betrays the solitude.

New children play upon the green,
 New weary sleep below,
 And still the pensive spring returns,
 And still the punctual snow!

II May Flower

Pink, small, and punctual,
 Aromatic, low,
 Covert in April,
 Candid in May,

Dear to the moss,
 Known by the knoll,
 Next to the robin
 In every human soul

Bold little beauty,
 Bedecked with thee,
 Nature forswears
 Antiquity

V

The pedigree of honey
 Does not concern the bee,
 A clover, any time, to him
 Is aristocracy

VI A Service of Song

Some keep the Sabbath going to church,
 I keep it staying at home,
 With a bobolink for a chorister,
 And an orchard for a dome

Some keep the Sabbath in surplice,
 I just wear my wings,
 And instead of tolling the bell for church,
 Our little sexton sings

God preaches,—a noted clergyman,—
 And the sermon is never long,
 So instead of getting to heaven at last,
 I 'm going all along!

VII

The bee is not afraid of me,
 I know the butterfly,
 The pretty people in the woods
 Receive me cordially

The brooks laugh louder when I come,
 The breezes madder play

Wherefore, mine eyes, thy silver mists?
 Wherefore, O summer's day?

XV The Bee

Like trains of cars on tracks of plush
 I hear the level bee
 A jar across the flowers goes,
 Their velvet masonry

Withstands until the sweet assault
 Their chivalry consumes,
 While he, victorious, tilts away
 To vanquish other blooms

His feet are shod with gauze,
 His helmet is of gold,
 His breast, a single onyx
 With chrysoprase, inlaid

His labor is a chant,
 His idleness a tune,
 Oh, for a bee's experience
 Of clovers and of noon!

XVI

Presentiment is that long shadow on the lawn,
 Indicative that suns go down,
 The notice to the startled grass
 That darkness is about to pass

XVII

As children bid the guest good night,
 And then reluctant turn,
 My flowers raise their pretty lips,
 Then put their nightgowns on

As children caper when they wake,
 Merry that it is morn,
 My flowers from a hundred cribs
 Will peep, and prance again

XX Two Worlds

It makes no difference abroad,
 The seasons fit the same,
 The mornings blossom into noons,
 And split their pods of flame

Wild flowers kindle in the woods,
 The brooks brag all the day,
 No blackbird bates his jargonizing
 For passing Calvary

*Auto da-fé*⁴⁸ and judgment
Are nothing to the bee,
His separation from his rose
To him seems misery.

XXI The Mountain

The mountain sat upon the plain
In his eternal chair,
His observation omnifold,
His inquest everywhere.

The seasons prayed around his knees,
Like children round a sire.
Grandfather of the days is he,
Of dawn the ancestor.

XXII A Day

I'll tell you how the sun rose,—
A ribbon at a time.
The steeples swam in amethyst,
The news like squirrels ran.

The hills untied their bonnets,
The bobolinks begun.
Then I said softly to myself,
"That must have been the sun!"

* * *

But how he set, I know not.
There seemed a purple stile
Which little yellow boys and girls
Were climbing all the while
Till when they reached the other side,
A domine in gray
Put gently up the evening bars,
And led the flock away.

XXIII

The butterfly's assumption-gown,
In chrysoprase apartments hung,
This afternoon put on
How condescending to descend,
And be of buttercups the friend
In a New England town!

XXIV. The Wind

Of all the sounds despatched abroad,
There's not a charge to me

⁴⁸ Ceremony for pronouncing judgment and burning heretics in the Spanish Inquisition.

10

Like that old measure in the boughs,
That phraseless melody

The wind does, working like a hand
Whose fingers brush the sky,
Then quiver down, with tufts of tune
Permitted gods and me

When winds go round and round in bands,
And thrum upon the door,
And birds take places overhead,
To bear them orchestra,

10

I crave him grace, of summer boughs,
If such an outcast be,
He never heard that fleshless chant
Rise solemn in the tree,

As if some caravan of sound
On deserts, in the sky,
Had broken rank,
Then knit, and passed
In seamless company.

20

XXV Death and Life

Apparently with no surprise
To any happy flower,
The frost beheads it at its play
In accidental power
The blond assassin passes on,
The sun proceeds unmoved
To measure off another day
For an approving God

10

XXVI

'T was later when the summer went
Than when the cricket came,
And yet we knew that gentle clock
Meant nought but going home.

'T was sooner when the cricket went
Than when the winter came,
Yet that pathetic pendulum
Keeps esoteric time.

XXVII. Indian Summer

These are the days when birds come back,
A very few, a bird or two,
To take a backward look.

These are the days when skies put on
The old, old sophistries of June,—
A blue and gold mistake

Oh, fraud that cannot cheat the bee,
Almost thy plausibility
Induces my belief,

Till ranks of seeds their witness bear
And softly through the altered air
Hurries a timid leaf!

Oh sacrament of summer days,
Oh, last communion in the haze
Permit a child to join,

Thy sacred emblems to partake,
Thy consecrated bread to break,
Taste thine immortal wine!

XXVIII Autumn

The morns are meeker than they were,
The nuts are getting brown,
The berry's cheek is plumper,
The rose is out of town

The maple wears a gayer scarf,
The field a scarlet gown
Lest I should be old fashioned,
I'll put a trinket on

XXIX Beclouded

The sky is low, the clouds are mean,
A travelling flake of snow
Across a barn or through a rut
Debates if it will go

A narrow wind complains all day
How some one treated him,
Nature, like us, is sometimes caught
Without her diadem

XXX The Hemlock

I think the hemlock likes to stand
Upon a marge of snow,
It suits his own austerity,
And satisfies an awe

That men must slake in wilderness,
Or in the desert cloy,—
An instinct for the hoar, the bald,
Lapland's necessity

The hemlock's nature thrives on cold,
The gnash of northern winds
Is sweetest nutriment to him,
His best Norwegian wines

To satin races he is nought,
But children on the Don
Beneath his tabernacles play,
And Dneiper wrestlers run

XXXI

There's a certain slant of light,
On winter afternoons,
That oppresses, like the weight
Of cathedral tunes

Heavenly hurt it gives us,
We can find no scar,
But internal difference
Where the meanings are

None may teach it anything,
'T is the seal, despair,—
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the air

When it comes, the landscape listens
Shadows hold their breath,
When it goes, 't is like the distance
On the look of death

iv *Time and Eternity*

I

One dignity delays for all,
One mitred afternoon
None can avoid this purple,
None evade this crown

Coach it insures, and footmen,
Chamber and state and throng,
Bells, also, in the village,
As we ride grand along

What dignified attendants,
What service when we pause!
How loyally at parting
Their hundred hats they raise!

How pomp surpassing ermine,
When simple you and I
Present our meek escutcheon,
And claim the rank to die!

THE FUNERAL

II Too Late

Delayed till she had ceased to know,
Delayed till in its vest of snow

Her loving bosom lay
An hour behind the fleeting breath,
Later by just an hour than death,—
Oh, lagging yesterday!

Could she have guessed that it would be,
Could but a crier of the glee
Have climbed the distant hill,
Had not the bliss so slow a pace,—
Who knows but this surrendered face
Were undefeated still?

Oh, if there may departing be
Any forgot by victory
In her imperial round,
Show them this meek apparelled thing,
That could not stop to be a king,
Doubtful if it be crowned!

IV

Safe in their alabaster chambers,
Untouched by morning and untouched by noon,
Sleep the meek members of the resurrection,
Rafter of satin, and roof of stone.

Light laughs the breeze in her castle of sunshine;
Babbles the bee in a stolid ear,
Pipe the sweet birds in ignorant cadence,—
Ah, what sagacity perished here!

Grand go the years in the crescent above them,
Worlds scoop their arcs, and firmaments row,
Diadems drop and Doges surrender,
Soundless as dots on a disk of snow

V

On this long storm the rainbow rose,
On this late morn the sun;
The clouds, like listless elephants,
Horizons straggled down.

The birds rose smiling in their nests,
The gales indeed were done;
Alas! how heedless were the eyes
On whom the summer shone!

The quiet nonchalance of death
No daybreak can bestir,

The slow archangel's syllables
Must awaken her

X

I died for beauty, but was scarce
Adjusted in the tomb,
When one who died for truth was lain
In an adjoining room.

He questioned softly why I failed?
"For beauty," I replied
"And I for truth,—the two are one,
We brethren are," he said

And so, as kinsmen met a night,
We talked between the rooms,
Until the moss had reached our lips,
And covered up our names

XII Real

I like a look of agony,
Because I know it's true,
Men do not sham convulsion,
Nor simulate a throe

The eyes glaze once, and that is death.
Impossible to feign
The beads upon the forehead
By homely anguish strung

XIII. The Funeral

That short, potential stir
That each can make but once,
That bustle so illustrious
'T is almost consequence,

Is the *éclat*⁴⁹ of death.
Oh, thou unknown renown
That not a beggar would accept,
Had he the power to spurn!

XIV

I went to thank her,
But she slept;
Her bed a funnelled stone,
With nosegays at the head and foot,
That travellers had thrown,

Who went to thank her;
But she slept.

⁴⁹ Splendor

'T was short to cross the sea
To look upon her like, alive
But turning back 't was slow

XV

I've seen a dying eye
Run round and round a room
In search of something as it seemed,
Then cloudier become,
And then, obscure with fog
And then be soldered down
Without disclosing what it be,
'T were blessed to have seen

XVI Refuge

The clouds their backs together laid,
The north begun to push,
The forcses galloped till they fell
The lightning skipped like mice
The thunder crumbled like a stuff—
How good to be safe in tombs,
Where nature's temper cannot reach,
Nor vengeance ever comes!

XVII

I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea,
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven,
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given

XVIII Playmates

God permits industrious angels
Afternoons to play
I met one,—forgot my school-mates,
All, for him, straightway

God calls home the angels promptly
At the setting sun,
I missed mine How dreary marbles,
After playing Crown!

XIX

To know just how he suffered would be dear,
To know if any human eyes were near

To whom he could intrust his wavering gaze,
Until it settled firm on Paradise

To know if he was patient, part content,
Was dying as he thought, or different,
Was it a pleasant day to die,
And did the sunshine face his way?

What was his furthest mind, of home, or God,
Or what the distant say 10
At news that he ceased human nature
On such a day?

And wishes, had he any?
Just his sigh, accented,
Had been legible to me
And was he confident until
Ill fluttered out in everlasting well?

And if he spoke, what name was best,
What first
What one broke off with 20
At the drowsiest?

Was he afraid, or tranquil?
Might he know
How conscious consciousness could grow,
Till love that was, and love too blest to be,
Meet—and the junction be Eternity?

XX

The last night that she lived,
It was a common night,
Except the dying, this to us
Made nature different

We noticed smallest things,—
Things overlooked before,
By this great light upon our minds
Italicized, as 't were

That others could exist
While she must finish quite, 10
A jealousy for her arose
So nearly infinite

We waited while she passed,
It was a narrow time,
Too jostled were our souls to speak,
At length the notice came

She mentioned, and forgot,
Then lightly as a reed

Bent to the water, shivered scarce,
Consented, and was dead

And we, we placed the hair,
And drew the head erect,
And then an awful leisure was,
Our faith to regulate

XXI The First Lesson

Not in this world to see his face
Sounds long, until I read the place
Where this is said to be
But just the primer to a life
Unopened, rare, upon the shelf,
Clasped yet to him and me

And yet, my primer suits me so
I would not choose a book to know
Than that, be sweeter wise;
Might some one else so learned be,
And leave me just my A B C,
Himself could have the skies

XXII

The bustle in a house
The morning after death
Is solemnest of industries
Enacted upon earth,—

The sweeping up the heart,
And putting love away
We shall not want to use again
Until eternity

XXIII

I reason, earth is short,
And anguish absolute.
And many hurt;
But what of that?

I reason, we could die:
The best vitality
Cannot excel decay;
But what of that?

I reason that in heaven
Somehow, it will be even,
Some new equation given,
But what of that?

XXIV

20 Afraid? Of whom am I afraid?
Not death, for who is he?
The porter of my father's lodge
As much abasheth me.

Of life? 'T were odd I fear a thing
That comprehendeth me
In one or more existences
At Deity's decree

Of resurrection? Is the east
Afraid to trust the morn
With her fastidious forehead?
As soon impeach my crown!

10

XXV Dying

The sun kept setting, setting still,
No hue of afternoon
Upon the village I perceived.—
10 From house to house 't was noon.

The dusk kept dropping, dropping still;
No dew upon the grass,
But only on my forehead stopped,
And wandered in my face

My feet kept drowsing, drowsing still,
My fingers were awake.
Yet why so little sound myself
Unto my seeming make?

10

How well I knew the light before!
I could not see it now
'T is dying, I am doing, but
I'm not afraid to know.

XXVI

Two swimmers wrestled on the spar
Until the morning sun,
When one turned smiling to the land.
O God, the other one!

The stray ships passing spied a face
Upon the waters borne,
With eyes in death still begging raised,
And hands beseeching thrown.

XXVII. The Chariot

10

Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;

The carnage held but just ourselves
And Immortality

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility

We passed the school where children played,
Their lessons scarcely done,
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground,
The roof was scarcely visible
The cornice but a mound

Since then 't is centuries, but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity

XXIX Resurgam ⁵⁰

At last to be identified!
At last, the lamps upon thy side,
The rest of life to see!
Past midnight, past the morning star!
Past sunrise! Ah! what leagues there are
Between our feet and day!

XXXV Emancipation

No rack can torture me,
My soul's at liberty
Behind this mortal bone
There knits a bolder one

You cannot prick with saw,
Nor rend with scymitar
Two bodies therefore be,
Bind one, and one will flee

The eagle of his nest
No easier divest
And gain the sky,
Than mayest thou,

Except thyself may be
Thine enemy,
Captivity is consciousness,
So 's liberty

⁵⁰ I shall rise again

XXXVI Lost

I lost a world the other day
Has anybody found?
You'll know it by the row of stars
Around its forehead bound

A rich man might not notice it,
Yet to my frugal eye
Of more esteem than ducats
Oh, find it, sir, for me!

XXXVII

If I should n't be alive
When the robins come,
Give the one in red cravat
A memorial crumb

If I could n't thank you,
Being just asleep,
You will know I'm trying
With my granite lip!

XXXVIII

Sleep is supposed to be,
By souls of sanity,
The shutting of the eye

Sleep is the station grand
Down which on either hand
The hosts of witness stand!

Morn is supposed to be,
By people of degree,
The breaking of the day

Morning has not occurred!
That shall aurora be
East of eternity,

One with the banner gay,
One in the red array,—
That is the break of day

XXXIX

I shall know why, when time is over,
And I have ceased to wonder why,
Christ will explain each separate anguish
In the fair schoolroom of the sky

He will tell me what Peter promised,⁵¹
And I, for wonder at his woe,

⁵¹ Cf. Matthew 26:32-35, 73

I shall forget the drop of anguish
That scalds me now, that scalds me now.

XL

I never lost as much but twice,
And that was in the sod,

Twice have I stood a beggar
Before the door of God!

Angels, twice descending,
Reimbursed my store
Burglar, banker, father,
I am poor once more!

FROM

*Poems*SECOND SERIES ⁵²

*My nosegays are for captives,
Dim, long-expectant eyes,
Fingers denied the plucking,
Patient till paradise.*

*To such, if they should whisper
Of morning and the moor,
They bear no other errand,
And I, no other prayer*

I *Life*

I

I 'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there 's a pair of us—do n't tell!
They 'd banish us, you know

How dreary to be somebody!
How public, like a frog
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog!

Some other thirsty there may be
To whom this would have pointed me
Had it remained to speak

And so I always bear the cup
If, haply, mine may be the drop
Some pilgrim thirst to slake,—

If, haply, any say to me,
"Unto the little, unto me,"
When I at last awake

II

I bring an unaccustomed wine
To lips long parching, next to mine,
And summon them to drink.

Crackling with fever, they essay,
I turn my brimming eyes away,
And come next hour to look.

The hands still hug the tardy glass;
The lips I would have cooled, alas!
Are so superfluous cold,

I would as soon attempt to warm
The bosoms where the frost has lain
Ages beneath the mould.

10

VI. Hope

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul.
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard,
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I 've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me

10

VIII. Triumphant

Who never lost, are unprepared
A coronet to find;
Who never thirsted, flagons
And cooling tamarind.

⁵² *Poems by Emily Dickinson*, edited by two of her friends, T. W. Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd, Second Series, Boston, 1891. This volume contains forty-three poems, arranged as in the first collection of 1890. The present editor has attempted to choose from each section poems which are both representative and excellent as literature

Who never climbed the weary league—
Can such a foot explore
The purple territories
On Pizarro's shore?

How many legions overcome?
The emperor will say
How many colors taken
On Revolution Day?

How many bullets bearest?
The royal scar hast thou?
Angels, write "Promoted"
On this soldier's brow!

IX The Test

I can wade grief,
Whole pools of it,—
I'm used to that
But the least push of joy
Breaks up my feet,
And I tip—drunken
Let no pebble smile,
'T was the new liquor,—
That was all!

Power is only pain,
Stranded, through discipline,
Till weights will hang
Give balm to giants,
And they'll wilt, like men
Give Himmaleh,⁵³—
They'll carry him!⁵⁴

X Escape

I never hear the word "escape"
Without a quicker blood,
A sudden expectation,
A flying attitude
I never hear of poisons broad
By soldiers battered down,
But I tug childish at my bars,—
Only to fail again!

XIV

The thought beneath so slight a film
Is more distinctly seen,—
As laces just reveal the surge,
Or mists the Apennine

⁵³ Himalaya Mountains?

⁵⁴ Himalayas personified as a mountain.

XVI

Surgeons must be very careful
When they take the knife!
Underneath their fine incisions
Stirs the culprit,—Life!

10

XVII The Railway Train

I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks,
And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,
And, supercilious, peer
In shanties by the sides of roads,
And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides, and crawl between,
Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanza,
Then chase itself down hill

10

And neigh like Boanerges,⁵⁵
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop—docile and omnipotent—
At its own stable door

10

XVIII The Show

The show is not the show,
But they that go
Menagerie to me
My neighbor be
Fair play—
Both went to see

XX

A thought went up my mind to day
That I have had before,
But did not finish,—some way back,
I could not fix the year,

Nor where it went, nor why it came
The second time to me,
Nor definitely what it was,
Have I the art to say

But somewhere in my soul, I know
I've met the thing before,
It just reminded me—'t was all—
And came my way no more

⁵⁵ Sons of thunder —cf Mark iii 17

XXVI

Victory comes late,
 And is held low to freezing lips
 Too rapt with frost
 To take it
 How sweet it would have tasted,
 Just a drop!
 Was God so economical?
 His table's spread too high for us
 Unless we dine on tip-toe
 Crumbs fit such little mouths,
 Cherries suit robins;
 The eagle's golden breakfast
 Strangles them
 God keeps his oath to sparrows,⁵⁶
 Who of little love
 Know how to starve!

XXVIII

Experiment to me
 Is every one I meet
 If it contain a kernel?
 The figure of a nut
 Presents upon a tree,
 Equally plausibly,
 But meat within is requisite,
 To squirrels and to me

XXX

Faith is a fine invention
 For gentlemen who see,
 But microscopes are prudent
 In an emergency!

XXXIII The Duel

I took my power in my hand
 And went against the world,
 'T was not so much as David had,⁵⁷
 But I was twice as bold
 I aimed my pebble, but myself
 Was all the one that fell.
 Was it Goliath was too large,
 Or only I too small?

XLIV. The Shelter

The body grows outside,—
 The more convenient way,—

⁵⁶ Cf. Matthew x.29.

⁵⁷ Cf. I Samuel xvii.49.

That if the spirit like to hide,
 Its temple stands alway

Ajar, secure, inviting,
 It never did betray
 The soul that asked its shelter
 In timid honesty.

LII

To learn the transport by the pain,
 As blind men learn the sun,
 To die of thirst, suspecting
 That brooks in meadows run;
 To stay the homesick, homesick feet
 Upon a foreign shore
 Haunted by native lands, the while,
 And blue, beloved air—

This is the sovereign anguish,
 This, the signal woe!
 These are the patient laureates
 Whose voices, trained below,

Ascend in ceaseless carol,
 Inaudible, indeed,
 To us, the duller scholars
 Of the mysterious bard!

LIII Returning

I years had been from home.
 And now, before the door,
 I dared not open, lest a face
 I never saw before

Stare vacant into mine
 And ask my business there.
 My business,—just a life I left,
 Was such still dwelling there?

I fumbled at my nerve,
 I scanned the windows near,
 The silence like an ocean rolled,
 And broke against my ear.

I laughed a wooden laugh
 That I could fear a door,
 Who danger and the dead had faced,
 But never quaked before.

I fitted to the latch
 My hand, with trembling care,

10

10

10

Lest back the awful door should spring,
And leave me standing there

I moved my fingers off
As cautiously as glass,
And held my ears and like a thief
Fled gasping from the house

LIV Prayer

Prayer is the little implement
Through which men reach
Where presence is denied them
They fling their speech

By means of it in God's ear,
If then He hear,
This sums the apparatus
Comprised in prayer

LVII Called Back

Just lost when I was saved!
Just felt the world go by!
Just girt me for the onset with eternity,
When breath blew back,
And on the other side
I heard recede the disappointed tide!

Therefore, as one returned, I feel,
Odd secrets of the line to tell!
Some sailor, skirting foreign shores,
Some pale reporter from the awful doors
Before the seal!

Next time, to stay!
Next time the things to see
By ear unheard,
Unscrutinized by eye

Next time, to tarry,
While the ages steal,—
Slow tramp the centuries,
And the cycles wheel

II Love

I Choice

Of all the souls that stand create
I have elected one
When sense from spirit flies away,
And subterfuge is done,

20

When that which is and that which was
Apart, intrinsic, stand,
And this brief tragedy of flesh
Is shifted like a sand,

When figures show their royal front
And mists are carved away,—
Behold the atom I preferred
To all the lists of clay!

10

IV The Contract

I gave myself to him,
And took himself for pay
The solemn contract of a life
Was ratified this way

The wealth might disappoint,
Myself a poorer prove
Thou this great purchaser suspect,
The daily own of Love

Depreciate the vision,
But, till the merchant buy,
Still fable, in the isles of spice,*
The subtle cargoes lie

10

At least, 't is mutual risk,—
Some found it mutual gain,
Sweet debt of Life,—each night to owe,
Insolvent, every noon

10

V The Letter

"Going to him! Happy letter! Tell him—
Tell him the page I did n't write,
Tell him I only said the syntax,
And left the verb and the pronoun out
Tell him just how the fingers hurried,
Then how they waded, slow, slow, slow,
And then you wished you had eyes in your pages,
So you could see what moved them so

"Tell him it was n't a practised writer,
You guessed, from the way the sentence toiled, 10
You could hear the bodice tug, behind you,
As if it held but the might of a child,
You almost pitied it, you, it worked so
Tell him— No, you may quibble there,
For it would split his heart to know it,
And then you and I were silent

"Tell him night finished before we finished,
And the old clock kept neighing 'day!'

And you got sleepy and begged to be ended—
 What could it hinder so, to say? 20
 Tell him just how she sealed you, cautious,
 But if he ask where you are hid
 Until to-morrow,—happy letter!
 Gesture, coquette. and shake your head!”

VI

The way I read a letter's this
 'T is first I lock the door,
 And push it with my fingers next,
 For transport it be sure

And then I go the furthest off
 To counteract a knock,
 Then draw my little letter forth
 And softly pick its lock

Then, glancing narrow at the wall,
 And narrow at the floor, 10
 For firm conviction of a mouse
 Not exorcised before,

Peruse how infinite I am
 To—no one that you know!
 And sigh for lack of heaven,—but not
 The heaven the creeds bestow.

VII

Wild night! Wild nights!
 Were I with thee,
 Wild nights should be
 Our luxury!

Futile the winds
 To a heart in port,—
 Done with the compass,
 Done with the chart.

Rowing in Eden!
 Ah! the sea! 10
 Might I but moor
 To-night in thee!

IX. Possession

Did the harebell loose her girdle
 To the lover bee,
 Would the bee the harebell hallow
 Much as formerly?

Did the paradise, persuaded,
 Yield her moat of pearl,

Would the Eden be an Eden,
 Or the earl an earl?

XIII

The moon is distant from the sea,
 And yet with amber hands
 She leads him, docile as a boy,
 Along appointed sands

He never misses a degree,
 Obedient to her eye,
 He comes just so far toward the town,
 Just so far goes away

Oh, Signor, thine the amber hand,
 And mine the distant sea,— 10
 Obedient to the least command
 Thine eyes impose on me

XIV

He put the belt around my life,—
 I heard the buckle snap,
 And turned away, imperial,
 My lifetime folding up
 Deliberate, as a duke would do
 A kingdom's title-deed,—
 Henceforth a dedicated sort,
 A member of the cloud

Yet not too far to come at call,
 And do the little toils 10
 That make the circuit of the rest,
 And deal occasional smiles
 To lives that stoop to notice mine
 And kindly ask it in,—
 Whose invitation, knew you not
 For whom I must decline?

XV. The Lost Jewel

I held a jewel in my fingers
 And went to sleep.
 The day was warm, and winds were prosy;
 I said: “‘T will keep.”

I woke and chid my honest fingers,—
 The gem was gone,
 And now an amethyst remembrance
 Is all I own.

XVI

What if I say I shall not wait?
 What if I burst the fleshly gate

And pass, escaped to thee?
 What if I file this mortal off
 See where it hurt me,—that 's enough,—
 And wade in liberty?

They cannot take us any more,—
 Dungeons may call, and guns implore,
 Unmeaning now, to me,
 As laughter was an hour ago,
 Or laces, or a travelling show,
 Or who died yesterday!

III Nature

II Out of the Morning

Will there really be a morning?
 Is there such a thing as day?
 Could I see it from the mountains
 If I were as tall as they?

Has it feet like water-lilies?
 Has it feathers like a bird?
 Is it brought from famous countries
 Of which I have never heard?

Oh, some scholar! Oh, some sailor!
 Oh, some wise man from the skies!
 Please to tell a little pilgrim
 Where the place called morning lies!

IX April

An altered look about the hills,
 A Tyrian⁵⁸ light the village fills,
 A wider sunrise in the dawn,
 A deeper twilight on the lawn,
 A print of a vermilion foot,
 A purple finger on the slope,
 A flippant fly upon the pane,
 A spider at his trade again,
 An added strut in chanticleer,
 A flower expected everywhere,
 An axe shrill singing in the woods,
 Fine-odors on untraveller roads,—
 All this, and more I cannot tell,
 A furtive look you know as well,
 And Nicodemus' ⁵⁹ mystery
 Receives its annual reply

⁵⁸ A bluish-red hue called Tyrian purple from dye used in City of Tyre

⁵⁹ Cf. John III 1-21

XIV In Shadow

I dreaded that first robin so,
 But he is mastered now,
 And I 'm accustomed to him grown,—
 He hurts a little, though

I thought if I could only live
 Till that first shout got by,
 Not all pianos in the woods
 Had power to mangle me

I dared not meet the daffodils,
 For fear their yellow gown
 Would pierce me with a fashion
 So foreign to my own

I wished the grass would hurry,
 So when 't was time to see,
 He 'd be too tall, the tallest one
 Could stretch to look at me

I could not bear the bees should come,
 I wished they 'd stay away
 In those dim countries where they go
 What word had they for me?

They 're here, though not a cicatrice failed,
 No blossom stayed away
 In gentle deference to me,
 The Queen of Calvary

Each one salutes me as he goes,
 And I my childish plumes
 Lift, in bereaved acknowledgment
 Of their unthinking drums

XV The Humming Bird

A route of evanescence
 With a revolving wheel,
 A resonance of emerald,
 A rush of cochineal,
 And every blossom on the bush
 Adjusts its tumbled head —
 The mail from Tunis, probably,
 An easy morning's ride

XX Old-Fashioned

Arcturus is his other name,—
 I 'd rather call him star!
 It's so unkind of science
 To go and interfere!

I pull a flower from the woods,—
A monster with a glass
Computes the stamens in a breath,
And has her in a class

Whereas I took the butterfly
Aforetime in my hat,
He sits erect in cabinets,
The clover-bells forgot

What once was heaven, is zenith now
Where I proposed to go
When time's brief masquerade was done,
Is mapped, and charted too!

What if the poles should frisk about
And stand upon their heads!
I hope I'm ready for the worst,
Whatever prank betides!

Perhaps the kingdom of Heaven's changed!
I hope the children there
Won't be new-fashioned when I come,
And laugh at me, and stare!

I hope the father in the skies
Will lift his little girl,—
Old-fashioned, naughty, everything,—
Over the stile of pearl!

XXI A Tempest

An awful tempest mashed the air,
The clouds were gaunt and few;
A black, as of a spectre's cloak,
Hid heaven and earth from view.

The creatures chuckled on the roofs
And whistled in the air,
And shook their fists and gnashed their teeth,
And swung their frenzied hair.

The morning lit, the birds arose,
The monster's faded eyes
Turned slowly to his native coast,
And peace was Paradise!

XXIII. In the Garden

A bird came down the walk
He did not know I saw,
He bit an angle-worm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw

And then he drank a dew
From a convenient grass,
And then hopped sidewise to the wall
To let a beetle pass

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all abroad,—
They looked like frightened beads, I thought;
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger, cautious,
I offered him a crumb,
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,
Too silver for a scam,
Or butterflies, off banks of noon,
Leap, plashless, as they swim.

XXIV The Snake

A narrow fellow in the grass
Occasionally rides,
You may have met him,—did you not,
His notice sudden is

The grass divides as with a comb,
A spotted shaft is seen;
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on.

He likes a boggy acre.
A floor too cool for corn
Yet when a child, and barefoot,
I more than once, at morn,

Have passed, I thought, a whip-lash
Unbraiding in the sun,—
When, stooping to secure it,
It wrinkled, and was gone.

Several of nature's people
I know, and they know me;
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality;

But never met this fellow,
Attended or alone,
Without a tighter breathing,
And zero at the bone

XLI

Like mighty footlights burned the red
At bases of the trees,—

The far theatricals of day
Exhibiting to these

'T was universe that did applaud
While, chierest of the crowd,
Enabled by his royal dress,
Myself distinguished God

XLVIII Fing'd Gentian

God made a little gentian,
It tried to be a rose
And failed, and all the summer laughed
But just before the snows
There came a purple creature
That ravished all the hill,
And summer hid her forehead,
And mockery was still
The frosts were her condition,
The Tyrian would not come
Until the North evoked it
"Creator! shall I bloom?"

L The Snow

It sifts from leaden sieves,
It powders all the wood,
It fills with alabaster wool
The wrinkles of the road

It makes an even face
Of mountain and of plain,—
Unbroken forehead from the east
Unto the east again

It reaches to the fence,
It wraps it, rail by rail,
Till it is lost in fleeces,
It flings a crystal veil

On stump and stack and stem,—
The summer's empty room,
Acres of seams where harvests were,
Recordless, but for them

It ruffles wrists of posts,
As ankles of a queen,—
Then stills its artisans like ghosts,
Denying they have been

iv *Time and Eternity*

IV Epitaph

Step lightly on this narrow spot!
The broadest land that grows

Is not so ample as the breast
These emerald seams enclose

Step lofty, for this name is told
As far as cannon dwell,
Or flag subsist or fame export
Her deathless syllable

XXV

Essential oils are wrung
The attar from the rose
Is not expressed by suns alone,
It is the gift of screws

The general rose decays
But this, in lady's drawer,
Makes summer when the lady lies
In ceaseless rosemary

10

XXVII

If I should die,
And you should live,
And time should gurgle on,
And morn should beam,
And noon should burn,
As it has usual done,
If birds should build as early,
And bees as bustling go,—
One might depart at option
From enterprise below!
'T is sweet to know that stocks will stand
When we with daisies lie,
That commerce will continue,
And trades as briskly fly
It makes the parting tranquil
And keeps the soul serene,
That gentlemen so sprightly
Conduct the pleasing scene!

10

10

XXIX Ghosts

One need not be a chamber to be haunted,
One need not be a house,
The brain has corridors surpassing
Material place

20

Far safer, of a midnight meeting
External ghost,
Than an interior confronting
That whiter host

Far safer through an Abbey gallop,
The stones achase,
Than, moonless, one's own self encounter
In lonesome place

Ourself, behind ourself concealed,
Should startle most,
Assassin, hid in our apartment,
Be horror's least

The prudent carries a revolver,
He bolts the door,
O'erlooking a superior spectre
More near

XLI The Forgotten Grave

After a hundred years
Nobody knows the place,—

Agony, that enacted there,
Motionless as peace

Weeds triumphant ranged,
Strangers strolled and spelled
At the lone orthography
Of the elder dead

Winds of summer fields
Recollect the way,—
Instinct picking up the key
Dropped by memory.

XLII

Lay this laurel on the one
Too intrinsic for renown.
Laurel! veil your deathless tree,—
Him you chasten, that is he!

FROM

*Bolts of Melody*⁶⁰

5

When I have seen the sun emerge
From his amazing house
And leave a day at every door,
A deed in every place,

Without the incident of fame
Or accident of noise,
The earth has seemed to me a drum
Pursued of little boys.

57

A soft sea washed around the house,
A sea of summer air,
And rose and fell the magic planks
That sailed without a care.

⁶⁰ From *Bolts of Melody: New Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Mabel Loomis Todd and Millicent Todd Bingham, published by Harper & Brothers Copyright 1945 by Millicent Todd Bingham

Bolts of Melody contains over six hundred poems withheld from publication until 1945. These poems were in Mrs. Todd's possession when the lawsuit (see Introduction, above) interrupted publication after the appearance of the Third Series of *Poems* in 1896. The book contains some of Emily Dickinson's finest work. Eighteen representative poems are included here with the kind permission of Harper & Brothers, Mrs. Millicent Todd Bingham.

For captain was the butterfly,
For helmsman was the bee,
And an entire universe
For the delighted crew

70

The day grew small, surrounded tight
By early, stooping night,
The afternoon in evening deep
Its yellow shortness dropped,

The winds went out their martial ways,
The leaves obtained excuse,
November hung his granite hat
Upon a nail of plush.

102

His mansion in the pool
The frog forsakes.
He rises on a log
And statements makes.

His auditors two worlds
Deducting me,
The orator of April
Is hoarse today.

His mittens at his feet
No hand hath he,
His cloquence a bubble
As fame should be

Applaud him, to discover
To your chagrin
Demosthenes has vanished
In forums green

113

A sparrow took a slice of twig
And thought it very nice,
I think, because his empty plate
Was handed nature twice

Invigorated fully,
Turned easy in the sky
As a familiar saddle
And rode immensity

117

She sights a bird, she chuckles,
She flattens, then she crawls,
She runs without the look of feet,
Her eyes increase to balls,

Her jaws stir, twitching, hungry,
Her teeth can hardly stand,
She leaps—but robin leaped the first!
Ah, pussy of the sand,

The hopes so juicy ripening
You almost bathed your tongue
When bliss disclosed a hundred wings
And fled with every one!

154

What is paradise? Who live there?
Are they farmers? Do they hoe?
Do they know that this is Amherst,
And that I am coming, too?

Do they wear new shoes in Eden?
Is it always pleasant there?
Won't they scold us when we're homesick
Or tell God how cross we are?

You are sure there's such a person
As a Father in the sky,
So if I get lost there, ever,
Or do what the nurse calls "die,"

10

I shan't walk the jasper barefoot,
Ransomed folks won't laugh at me?
Maybe Eden ain't so lonesome
As New England used to be!

175

The mob within the heart
Police cannot suppress
The riot given at the first
Is authorized as peace,

Not certified of scene
Or signified of sound,
But growing like a hurricane
In a congenial ground

263

He was weak and I was strong, then,
So he let me lead him in
I was weak and he was strong, then,
So I let him lead me home

'Twasn't far, the door was near,
'Twasn't dark, for he went too,
'Twasn't loud, for he said naught,
That was all I cared to know

Day knocked, and we must part,
Neither was strongest now,
He strove, and I strove too
We didn't do it though!

265

10

I felt my life with both my hands
To see if it was there,
I held my spirit to the glass
To prove it possible,

I turned my being round and round
And paused at every pound
To ask the owner's name for doubt
That I should know the sound,

I judged my features, jarred my hair,
I pushed my dimples by
And waited—if they twinkled back
Conviction might, of me

10

I told myself, "Take courage, friend,
That was a former time—
But we might learn to like the heaven
As well as our old home!"

379

'Tis not that dying hurts us so,
'Tis living hurts us more
But dying is a different way,
A kind behind the door,

The southern custom of the birds
That ere the frosts are due
Accepts a better latitude
We are the birds that stay—

The shiverers 'round farmers' doors,
For whose reluctant crumb
We stipulate, till pitying snows
Persuade our feathers home

439

Who goes to dine must take his feast
Or find the banquet mean,
The table is not laid without
Till it is laid within

For pattern is the mind bestowed
That, imitating her,
Our most ignoble services
Exhibit worthier

449

Tell all the truth but tell it slant,
Success in circuit lies,
Too bright for our infirm delight
The truth's superb surprise,

As lightning to the children eased
With explanation kind,
The truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind

455

The beggar at the door for fame
Were easily supplied,
But bread is that diviner thing,
Disclosed to be denied.

463

All men for honor hardest work
But are not known to earn,

Paid after they have ceased to work,
In infamy or urn

509

Crumbling is not an instant's act,
A fundamental pause.
Dilapidation's processes
Are organized decays.

'Tis first a cobweb on the soul,
A cuticle of dust.
A borer in the axis,
An elemental rust

10

Ruin is formal, devil's work,
Consecutive and slow—
Fail in an instant no man did,
Shipping is crash's law

10

565

How many schemes may die
In one short afternoon
Entirely unknown
To those they most concern:⁶¹

The man that was not robbed
Because by accident
He varied by a ribbon's width
From his accustomed route;

The love that would not try
Because beside the door
Some unsuspecting horse was tied
Surveying his despair.

10

599

Those, dying then, knew where they went,
They went to God's right hand;
That hand is amputated now
And God cannot be found.

The abdication of belief
Makes the behavior small—
Better an *ignis fatuus*⁶²
Than no illume⁶³ at all.

⁶¹ Hawthorne used this theme in "David Swan," possibly the source of this poem. "Sleeping or waking," Hawthorne wrote, "we hear not the airy footsteps of the strange things that almost happen."

⁶² False fire, will-o'-the-wisp; hence elusive.

⁶³ Illumination.

SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS (1835-1910)

(Mark Twain)

No other major American writer has had more extensive and varied experience with the life, the regions and the different levels of American society than Samuel Langhorne Clemens, known to the world as "Mark Twain." He was born in a frontier town on the banks of the Mississippi River, grew up as journeyman printer, became a steamboat pilot on the river during the flush times before the Civil War, served for a few weeks as a soldier on the Confederate side, then migrated to mining towns in Nevada, where he prospected for gold and shared the feverish dreams of immediate and vast wealth which haunted practical exiles in the West. There he became professional journalist, humorist, and lecturer—activities which eventually brought him not only the wealth which he had failed to find in Nevada mines, but also world fame, and in old age the rôle of national orator.

Meanwhile the slovenly, semi-cultured, frontier humorist married a refined and wealthy girl in the East, where he spent most of the second half of his life. He founded a huge publishing house, invested a fortune in an unsuccessful typesetting machine, finally went bankrupt, and then, at the age of 56, set out gallantly on a lecture tour around the globe in order to pay off even cent of indebtedness (for which he was no longer legally responsible). He not only succeeded in this determination but also created a new fortune, so that in his final years he was worth several hundred thousand dollars.

But financial success and millions of admirers did not bring Mark Twain lasting happiness or peace of mind. He was always haunted by stupidity, even his own, and infatuated by worldly sham and hypocrisy. In old age his many disappointments, especially the death of loved ones, brought him to the brink of despair and confirmed the pessimistic philosophy which had been growing on him since his youth. It is no wonder that a life so varied and contradictory and a personality equally puzzling have exercised the biographers. To his contemporaries, though most of them loved him, he was merely a literary clown. Before his death, however, a few critics like William

Dean Howells realized that he was a writer of major stature. Later came the psychological analysis of his genius. To Van Wyck Brooks he was a thwarted literary artist, frustrated by the crudity of his frontier background and later by the artificial refinement of his wife and New England culture. To Bernard DeVoto, an authority on the history of the frontier, Mark Twain drew his vitality from the Mississippi and the West. The controversy is still far from settled, though recent biographers and critics lean more toward DeVoto than Brooks.

Some of the contradictions in the remarkable life of Mark Twain might be traced back to his ancestry. Both his father and his mother were English in origin, and on both sides there was lingering pride in remote aristocratic pretensions. His father believed himself descended from a Clemens who sat as a judge in the trial of Charles I, and Mark Twain liked to believe that "he did what he could toward reducing the list of crowned shams of his day." His mother's family, the Lamptons, thought themselves descended from the family which inhabited the castle of Lampton, in Durham, for nine hundred years, though her son declared that he "never heard her refer in any way to her gilded ancestry when any person not a member of the family was present, for she had good American sense." But these stories indicate that a conviction of inner superiority persisted, a compensation for these Americans struggling for existence in a frontier economy. Such dreams led one of the Lamptons, the original of Colonel Mulberry Sellers in *The Gilded Age*, to live constantly in a world of fantastic illusion, and even the mature Mark Twain was forever hatching new schemes which he expected to make him a millionaire.

John Marshall Clemens was born in Virginia in 1798. When he was seven years old his father was killed, and the family moved to Kentucky, where the mother remarried. In 1823 John married Jane Lampton, reputed belle of the community. A respectable Virginian would choose a profession instead of a trade, and John chose law, which he attempted to practice in Gainsborough, Tennessee, on the Cum-

berland River. There his first child, Orion, was born in 1825. Then John moved to Jamestown, where he became circuit clerk of the county court, but he was soon reduced to keeping a general store. While in Tennessee he managed to scrape together \$500, with which he bought 75,000 acres of land, believing thereby he had insured the future wealth of his children. Eventually the land was worth all that John Clemens predicted—and more—for in addition to the valuable timber and fertile soil which it contained, both coal and oil were discovered on it—but not until long after it had passed out of the hands of the Clemenses.

After several moves, John Clemens left Tennessee in 1835 for a small frontier town on the Mississippi River—Florida, Missouri—where his brother-in-law, John Quarles, owned a farm and a general store, descriptions of which have been preserved in the lyric prose of Mark Twain's *Autobiography*. There Samuel was born November 30, 1835, a seven-months baby, not expected to live. Four years later the family moved to another town up the river, Hannibal, where John Clemens died in 1847, leaving a wife with four children. The oldest, Orion, had learned the printing trade, and he tried, without much success, to support the family with his printing office and a weekly newspaper, employing at one time his two brothers, Sam and Henry. In his brother's office Sam learned to set type, got his first experience at writing for the public—some of his experiments being crude satires on a rival editor—thereby laying the foundation of his later success as journalist and author. From 1853–56 he worked as journeyman printer in St. Louis, New York, Philadelphia, Keokuk, and Cincinnati, and occasionally got letters and humorous sketches published in various papers.

While employed again by his brother, who had moved to Keokuk, Sam decided—or later thought he had—to take a trip up the Amazon River. After finding a fifty-dollar bill which no one claimed, he set out—but, curiously by way of Cincinnati, where he stopped to work in another printing office. In the spring of 1857 he started by boat toward New Orleans, but before arriving there he was fired with the ambition to be a steamboat pilot, and Horace Bixby reluctantly accepted him as an apprentice. Later in *Life on the Mississippi* Mark Twain described the nightmare of learning to pilot a large boat through the ever-shifting channels of the river. Traffic on the Mississippi was booming. The pilots could earn as much as four hundred dollars a month. Samuel Clemens also enjoyed the glamour and the authority of being a pilot. But all this ended when the Union army blockaded the river, and after the

war steamboats could not meet the competition of the railroads.

For a few weeks Sam marched around his county with an informal company of amateur soldiers loyal to the Confederate side, but the group soon disintegrated. Meanwhile Orion, who had campaigned for Lincoln, was appointed Secretary for the Nevada Territory. Sam went with him by stagecoach to Nevada, a rugged trip which Mark Twain later narrated, with burlesque exaggeration, in *Roughing It*. In Nevada the brothers quickly caught the gambling fever of the mining towns, but after spending all his savings Sam finally accepted a position on the Virginia City *Enterprise*. Ostensibly he was a reporter, but he was expected to specialize in the kind of hoax, broad farce, and violent humor which delighted a rough masculine community. In this employment Samuel Clemens adopted the pen-name "Mark Twain," which was to become famous within a few years.

Forced to leave Nevada because he had foolishly challenged an editor to a duel, thereby violating a newly enacted law, he went to San Francisco, where he found employment as a reporter on the *Morning Call*. There he was also associated with Bret Harte and Artemus Ward, whom he had met in Nevada. Reporting proved irksome, but Mark Twain enjoyed contributing to two literary magazines, *Golden Era* and the *Californian*, each edited for a time by Bret Harte. In 1865 "The Jumping Frog" yarn was published in New York and was reprinted and quoted throughout the country. Suddenly he was famous.

After a visit to Nevada, in 1866, he made a trip to Hawaii, then known as the Sandwich Islands, for the Sacramento *Union*. On his return he gave his first public lecture in San Francisco, with such success that he would never again need to depend entirely on journalism for a livelihood. His Missouri drawl, his engaging personality, and the dramatic tricks of humorous delivery which he had learned from Artemus Ward, all contributed to his becoming one of the most popular speakers in America's history. On the stage, or in the uninhibited flow of his imaginative conversation, the full power of his genius made itself manifest. Some critics think there was a considerable leakage between his oral and written expression. But even his literary style, as he himself explained in his *Autobiography*, grew out of his knowledge of oral speech.

After a whirlwind lecture success in California, Mark Twain decided in 1867 to visit his family by way of the Isthmus of Nicaragua, Key West, and New York, meanwhile writing travel letters for the

Alta Californian This trip was a turning point in his life. In New York City a visit to the Holy Land on the *Quaker City* was being highly advertised, and the *Alta Californian* readily agreed to send Mark Twain along as a reporter, permitting him also to write some letters for New York papers. These accounts, revised, formed the substance of Mark Twain's second book, *The Innocents Abroad*, published in 1869. Both the letters and the book were almost phenomenally successful, partly because they were genuinely funny and partly because the author's aesthetic taste and common sense skepticism were on the cultural level of most of his readers. Having seen no art except chromos and cheap paintings, he found little to admire in the old masters. Consequently he ridiculed them with the same raucous humor which he had turned against the sham sentiments and pious hypocrisies of his fellow passengers. Some ministers and church members were offended, but most of his readers, who had no more respect for the past and ancient civilizations than he, were highly amused. In many ways *Innocents Abroad* was truer than its author could have realized.

One of the passengers aboard the *Quaker City*, Charles Langdon, from Elmira, New York, showed Mark Twain a picture of his sister, Olivia, and he immediately fell in love with the image. Back in New York, he secured an invitation to visit the wealthy and conservative family, which was at first shocked by his unconventional manners, but he married Olivia on February 2, 1870. Mark Twain thought a married man should settle down and, with Mr. Langdon's help, bought a third interest in the *Buffalo Express*. As a wedding gift the generous father also gave his daughter and son-in-law a fine house in Buffalo. But nothing went right. The first child, a boy, was born prematurely, and Olivia was ill for a long time. Mark Twain soon became bored with his routine editorial duties, and the Clemenses were thoroughly unhappy. Selling his interest in the paper at a loss, Mark Twain moved his family to Hartford, Connecticut, where he brought out his third book.

In this book, *Roughing It*, he attempted to capitalize on his trip to Nevada as he had done with the excursion on the *Quaker City*. He could recall few of his experiences, however, until he borrowed Orion's diary, then he freely invented and drew upon the tall-tale humor which he had heard in the West. The book is notable, however, because it shows how completely Mark Twain had mastered the most effective trick of successful humor, that of making himself the supreme ass of the asinine human race. This rôle he

played with increasing mastery until his final bitter and satirical assaults on the very conditions of human existence.

Meanwhile joy and sorrow were coming in quick contrast. In the spring of 1872 the second child, Susan, was born, and a few weeks later the boy, Langdon, died. Perhaps the loss of his son turned the father's thoughts to his own boyhood days in Missouri, for at this time he began planning the story which three years later was published as *Tom Sawyer*, probably the best loved account of boyhood life in all literature (rivaled only by *Huckleberry Finn*). In 1872 Mark Twain went to London to copywrite *Roughing It*, to prevent English publishers from pirating the book. In England his personality captivated nearly everyone he met, and he was lionized like an international celebrity, which indeed he was already becoming.

The following year the Clemens family again settled down in Hartford, and Mark Twain collaborated with Charles Dudley Warner, a neighbor and friend, on *The Gilded Age*, a title which has given a name to a period in American history. The collaborators attempted to satirize the social and economic evils of the scandalous reconstruction years following the Civil War. But the story was melodramatic, and the satire was scattered in too many directions to be effective. This is one of Mark Twain's least successful books, yet it does contain one unforgettable character, Colonel Mulberry Sellers, an American Mr. Micawber, though actually modeled on James Lamp-ton, a cousin of Mark Twain's mother.

In the same year, 1873, the whole family went to England, but Clemens brought Olivia and Susan back when Olivia became homesick, then returned to complete the necessary residence for an English copyright of *The Gilded Age*. This trip, like the former, was a continuous round of personal triumphs. Home again in 1874, he gave more lectures, completed *Tom Sawyer* in 1875, and collaborated with Bret Harte on a play, *Ah Sin*, which failed on the stage. Like his friend Howells, he never learned to write for the theatre, though he tried several times.

Perhaps the only time in his life when Mark Twain ever failed as a lecturer was his attempt to burlesque the literary reputations of the leading New England authors on the occasion of Whittier's birthday dinner, December 17, 1877. Though intending no offense, the humorist took personal liberties with reputations and idiosyncrasies which did not amuse the Boston "Brahmins."

During the 1880 decade Mark Twain published five major works. *A Tramp Abroad* (1880), based on

a walking trip through the Black Forest and Switzerland, *The Prince and the Pauper* (1882), a story of mistaken identity in Tudor times, *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), a hodge-podge of reminiscences, tall tales, and serious essays on the life and region of the Mississippi River, parts of which had been published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1875, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), that companion romance to *Tom Sawyer*, and finally *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889). All these works reveal the author's characteristic literary weaknesses and virtues. In all, the unity of plot and structure is uneven. One of the best stories in *A Tramp Abroad* is "Baker's Blue Jay Yarn," an American tall tale, having nothing to do with Europe. The confused identity of *The Prince and the Pauper* is a melodramatic motif from the Victorian novel, though the device appealed to Mark Twain because it suggested to him man's irresponsibility for his actions, a device used again in *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894) and anticipating the essay "What is Man?" The first half of *Life on the Mississippi* contains some of Mark Twain's finest writing, but the latter half is padded with newspaper clippings and odds and ends. Halfway through a book, Mark Twain usually bogged down—an observation which applies even to *Huckleberry Finn*. And in some ways the author of the *Connecticut Yankee* had grown very little intellectually since *Innocents Abroad*. He had little understanding of institutions, and his characters, no matter what the century or country, were simply Americans whom he had known in Missouri, the West, or Eastern cities. His view of the world was in some aspects always provincial.

But perhaps it is not important that structurally *Huckleberry Finn* is a poor novel. It has vitality, inventiveness of a rich imagination, and by some kind of literary magic it transfers living speech to the printed page. The same is true of *Life on the Mississippi*. And all these books contain penetrating social criticism, from the realistic portrayal of squalor and degeneration on the lower Mississippi to political autocracy and ecclesiastical humbug in Europe.

The 1890 decade was a critical one for Mark Twain. His publishing house, after making huge profits in the 1880's, was now running heavily into debt. This, the money he was spending on the Page typesetting machine, and the \$35,000 a year required for living expenses, were driving him to financial ruin. In 1891 he decided he could live more cheaply abroad than at home and settled his family in Berlin. He was too worried to write anything of consequence. In 1894 a new business manager settled with his credi-

tors for fifty cents on the dollar, but Mark Twain insisted on paying off every cent of his indebtedness. As one means of raising the money he undertook a world lecture tour, though his health scarcely seemed equal to the trip. Leaving Jean and Sue in America, he set out with his wife and Clara, traveling to Australia, India, and finally returning to England. In every country he was greeted like a hero. The trip was a great success. But in August Susan died of meningitis, and he soon learned that his youngest daughter, Jean, was an epileptic. About this time his brother Orion also died. Early in 1898 he was informed that the proceeds of his lecturing and the sale of his book about the trip, *Following the Equator*, had freed him from debt. But he was too bitter over his personal losses to enjoy the good news. During these years of suffering he produced two serious works, both in defense of women who he thought had been wronged. One was his *Defense of Harriet Shelley* and the other *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (1896). His feeling for Joan of Arc was a mystic adoration, and he published the work anonymously for fear that the public would not read it with sufficient seriousness under his name.

In Vienna, in 1898, he gave expression to his bitterness by working on his would-be philosophic essay, "What is Man?" (printed in 1906), which expounds a theory of extreme determinism that he had been developing for years. The argument was that man is responsible for nothing he does. His actions are the outcome of his "make" and his conditioning. It has been called Calvinism without God. He also completed his most brilliant and most pessimistic short story, "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg." He worked, too, on the longer story finally published after his death as *The Mysterious Stranger*, one of the bitterest fables ever written in the guise of a children's story.

From England Mark Twain viewed the Boer War with mixed feelings. He sympathized with the Boers, but declared prophetically that "England must not fall; it would mean an inundation of Russian and German political degradation which would envelop the globe and steep it in a sort of Middle-Age night and slavery which would last until Christ comes again."

World affairs increasingly depressed him. He greeted the new century with this bitter toast:

I bring you the stately nation named Christendom, returning, bedraggled, besmirched, and dishonored, from pirate raids in Kiao Chou, Manchuria, South Africa, and the Philippines, with her soul full of meanness, her pocket full of boodle, and her mouth full of pious hypocresies.

In October, 1900, Mark Twain sailed for home. To avoid living in the house where Susan had died, he rented a house in New York. He had already been given two honorary degrees by Yale, and in 1902 Columbia and the University of Missouri similarly recognized him. But these new honors were dimmed by his wife's illness. In desperation he took her to Italy, where she died in 1904. This new grief increased his gloom. Some critics have thought she repressed his art by her Victorian standards of propriety, but Mark Twain was certainly not aware of such an influence and probably it did not exist.

Mark Twain's pessimism could hardly have deepened with the years, but he became a male Cassandra on the stage of the world. He opposed the imperialistic attitudes of the United States. He objected to the settlement of the Russo-Japanese War; it should have been permitted to continue until there was a revolution in Russia overthrowing the Czarist regime. The crime and degradation of lower East Side New York saddened him. He heaped sarcasm upon the head of the exhibitionist Theodore Roosevelt. Many of these heated accusations and imaledictions have been collected by Bernard DeVoto under the appropriate title of *Mark Twain in Expiration*.

But it would be a mistake to think that Mark Twain got no enjoyment out of his last years. Always somewhat of an exhibitionist himself, he began at seventy to dress entirely in white, winter and summer, and he took delight in the sensation which his appearance created in public. He occasionally attended banquets and could still win an audience with his lively language. Reporters interviewed him almost daily. He was in fact a sort of philosophical oracle, as Will Rogers was later. But the personal grief continued. Jean died in 1907, and he himself became seriously ill with anemia.

Samuel Clemens was born during the appearance of Halley's comet, and he had long predicted that he would die when the comet returned. Like so many other curious happenings in this remarkable life, his prophecy came true on April 21, 1910.

The color of the dream and the consummate acting in Mark Twain's literary life have often led to a misunderstanding of his mind and character. Although Van Wick Brooks may have exaggerated the crudity of the social environment of his youth, Mark Twain did live close to the frontier—if not in Missouri, certainly in Nevada Territory and the mining camps—and there he acquired habits, mannerisms, and professional numerous devices which later became his stock in trade as a writer. It is difficult

at times to separate the man from the role, but, like all really great humorists and satirists, Mark Twain was above all else a moralist. A moralist is at heart profoundly serious, and so was Mark Twain more often than his public realized. He once remarked that he was not, in fact, a humorist at all, but that he merely told the truth and people, not being familiar with truth, thought it was funny. This was an accurate observation on his art, for his chief literary characteristic was telling the truth—of course as he saw it—so boldly, so uncompromisingly, that he shocked the reader. In this respect he was a realist, like Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser, whom he anticipated. The main difference between Mark Twain and Dreiser, for instance, is that Dreiser does nothing to disguise his seriousness, to make it appealing.

Even Mark Twain sometimes discarded his cap and bells when he talked or wrote on his one most profound conviction, his belief that man is merely a puppet whose strings are manipulated by forces beyond his knowledge or power. In expressing this deterministic doctrine, he may become so serious that he is boring, as in "What is Man?" But his accounts of how he became a writer by accident are always enlivened by anecdote and paradox. Some critics have attributed this dogmatic pessimism to Mark Twain's philosophical ignorance, but the majority of professional philosophers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century adopted some variety of determinism. In denying free will to man, Mark Twain anticipated the bulk of twentieth century sociological, educational, and, to a large extent even ethical theory. Economic depressions, unemployment and world wars have not given modern men confidence that they are the masters of their own fate or captains of their souls. To those individuals who still believe that each man is personally responsible to a just God for everything he does or fails to do in this life, Mark Twain should have some appeal too, for no writer has more vigorously condemned selfishness, dishonesty, and intolerance. Though he did not belong to a church, he supported worthy causes and was the intimate friend of the Rev. and Joseph Twitchell, in Hartford, Connecticut. His book on Joan of Arc contains proof that he was not without reverence for a saintly character.

The reader of Mark Twain's *Autobiography* will also discover that he had the sensibility of a poet. The memorable odors of spring woods, of growing things on the farm in a Missouri summer, and of the appetizing foods heaped up at a country dinner, all come back to the old man dictating at random his life

of the past, and they are conveyed to the reader with the fresh vividness that only the master of style can achieve. Nor is this aesthetic quality absent from earlier works, such as *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, those poetic images of perpetual youth. Even in *The Mysterious Stranger*, a fable of childhood so bitter that the author left it to be published post-

humously, there is a tender compassion for human suffering probably unsurpassed in any literature. Whether as clown, satirist, amateur philosopher, or romancer of youth, Mark Twain wrote as an artist, not always with uniform success, but constantly testing the value of words and the rhythm of speech, oral and written.

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*Baker's Bluejay Yarn*¹

Animals talk to each other, of course. There can be no question about that, but I suppose there are very few people who can understand them. I never

¹ The last three paragraphs of Chapter II and all of Chapter III of *A Tramp Abroad*, 1880. One of the finest examples in Mark Twain's works of the "tall tale." It was out of place in *A Tramp Abroad*.

knew but one man who could. I knew he could, however, because he told me so himself. He was a middle-aged, simple-hearted miner who had lived in a lonely corner of California, among the woods and mountains, a good many years, and had studied the ways of his only neighbors, the beasts and the birds, until

he believed he could accurately translate any remark which they made. This was Jim Baker. According to Jim Baker, some animals have only a limited education, and use only very simple words and scarcely ever a comparison or a flowery figure, whereas certain other animals have a large vocabulary, a fine command of language and a ready and fluent delivery, consequently these latter talk a great deal they like it, they are conscious of their talent, and they enjoy "showing off." Baker said, that after long and careful observation he had come to the conclusion that the bluejays were the best talkers he had found among birds and beasts. Said he:

"There's more to a bluejay than any other creature. He has got more moods, and more different kinds of feelings than other creatures, and, mind you, what ever a bluejay feels, he can put into language. And no mere commonplace language, either, but rattling out-and-out book-talk—and bristling with metaphor, too—just bristling! And as for command of language—why you never see a bluejay get stuck for a word. No man ever did. They just boil out of him! And another thing. I've noticed a good deal, and there's no bud, or cow, or anything that uses as good grammar as a bluejay. You may say a cat uses good grammar. Well, a cat does—but you let a cat get excited once, you let a cat get to pulling fur with another cat on a shed, nights, and you'll hear grammar that will give you the lockjaw. Ignorant people think it's the noise which fighting cats make that is so aggravating, but it ain't so, it's the sickening grammar they use. Now I've never heard a jay use bad grammar but very seldom, and when they do, they are as ashamed as a human, they shut right down and leave."

"You may call a jay a bird. Well, so he is, in a measure—because he's got feathers on him, and don't belong to no church, perhaps, but otherwise he is just as much a human as you be. And I'll tell you for why. A jay's gifts, and instincts, and feelings, and interests, cover the whole ground. A jay hasn't got any more principle than a Congressman. A jay will lie, a jay will steal, a jay will deceive, a jay will betray, and four times out of five, a jay will go back on his solemnest promise. The sacredness of an obligation is a thing which you can't cram into no bluejay's head. Now, on top of all this, there's another thing, a jay can out-swear any gentleman in the mines. You think a cat can swear. Well, a cat can, but you give a bluejay a subject that calls for his reserve-powers, and whe-

is your cat? Don't talk to me—I know too much about this thing. And there's yet another thing in the one little particular of scolding—just good clean, out-and-out scolding—a bluejay can lay over anything, human or divine. Yes, sir, a jay is everything that a man is. A jay can cry, a jay can laugh, a jay can feel shame, a jay can reason and plan and discuss, a jay likes gossip and scandal, a jay has got a sense of humor, a jay knows when he is an ass just as well as you do—maybe better. If a jay ain't human, he better take in his sign, that's all. Now I'm going to tell you a perfectly true fact about some bluejays.

"When I first begun to understand jay language correctly, there was a little incident happened here. Seven years ago, the last man in this region but me moved away. There stands his house—been empty ever since, a log house, with a plank roof—just one big room, and no more, no ceiling—nothing between the rafters and the floor. Well, one Sunday morning I was sitting out here in front of my cabin, with my cat, taking the sun, and looking at the blue hills, and listening to the leaves rustling so lonely in the trees, and thinking of the home away yonder in the states, that I hadn't heard from in thirteen years, when a bluejay lit on that house, with an acorn in his mouth, and says, 'Hello, I reckon I've struck something.' When he spoke, the acorn dropped out of his mouth and rolled down the roof, of course, but he didn't care, his mind was all on the thing he had struck. It was a knot hole in the roof. He cocked his head to one side, shut one eye and put the other one to the hole, like a possum looking down a jug, then he glanced up with his bright eyes, gave a wink or two with his wings—which signifies gratification, you understand—and says, 'It looks like a hole, it's located like a hole—blamed if I don't believe it is a hole!'

"Then he cocked his head down and took another look, he glances up perfectly joyful, this time winks his wings and his tail both, and says, 'Oh, no, this ain't no fat thing, I reckon! If I ain't in luck!—why it's a perfectly elegant hole!' So he flew down and got that acorn, and fetched it up and dropped it in and was just tilting his head back, with the heavenliest smile on his face, when all of a sudden he was paralyzed into a listening attitude and that smile faded gradually out of his countenance like breath off'n a razor, and the queerest look of surprise took its place. Then he says, 'Why I didn't hear it fall!' He cocked his eye at the hole again and took a long

look, raised up and shook his head, stepped around to the other side of the hole and took another look from that side, shook his head again. He studied a while, then he just went into the details—walked round and round the hole and spied into it from every point of the compass. No use. Now he took a thinking attitude on the comb of the roof and scratched the back of his head with his right foot a minute, and finally says, 'Well, it's too many for me, that's certain, must be a mighty long hole, however I ain't got no time to fool around here, I got to 'tend to business. I reckon it's all right—chance it, anyway.'

"So he flew off and fetched another acorn and dropped it in, and tried to flirt his eye to the hole quick enough to see what become of it, but he was too late. He held his eye there as much as a minute, then he raised up and sighed, and says, 'Confound it, I don't seem to understand this thing, no way, however, I'll tackle her again.' He fetched another acorn, and done his level best to see what become of it, but he couldn't. He says, 'Well, I never struck no such a hole as this before, I'm of the opinion it's a totally new kind of a hole.' Then he begun to get mad. He held in for a spell, walking up and down the comb of the roof and shaking his head and muttering to himself, but his feelings got the upper hand of him, presently, and he broke loose and cussed himself black in the face. I never see a bird take on so about a little thing. When he got through he walks to the hole and looks in again for half a minute, then he says, 'Well, you're a long hole, and a deep hole, and a mighty singular hole altogether—but I've started in to fill you, and I'm d—d if I *don't* fill you, if it takes a hundred years!'

"And with that, away he went. You never see a bird work so since you was born. He laid into his work like a nigger, and the way he hove acorns into that hole for about two hours and a half was one of the most exciting and astonishing spectacles I ever struck. He never stopped to take a look any more—he just hove 'em in and went for more. Well, at last he could hardly flop his wings, he was so tickered out. He comes a-swooping down, once more sweating like an ice-pitcher, drops his acorn in and says, 'Now I guess I've got the bulge on you by this time.' So he bent down for a look. If you'll believe me, when his head come up again he was just pale with rage. He says, 'I've shoveled acorns enough in there to keep the family thirty years, and if I can see a sign of one of

em I wish I may land in a museum with a belly full of sawdust in two minutes!'

'He just had strength enough to crawl up on to the comb and lean his back agin the chimbly, and then he collected his impressions and begun to free his mind. I see in a second that what I had mistook for profanity in the mines was only just the rudiments, as you may say.

"Another jay was going by, and heard him doing his devotions, and stops to inquire what was up. The sufferer told him the whole circumstance, and says, 'Now yonder's the hole, and if you don't believe me, go and look for yourself.' So this fellow went and looled, and comes back and says, 'How many did you say you put in there?' 'Not any less than two tons,' says the sufferer. The other jay went and looked again. He couldn't seem to make it out, so he raised a yell, and three more jays come. They all examined the hole, they all made the sufferer tell it over again, then they all discussed it, and got off as many leather-headed opinions about it as an average crowd of humans could have done.

"They called in more jays, then more and more, till pretty soon this whole region 'peared to have a blue flush about it. There must have been five thousand of them, and such another jawing and disputing and ripping and cussing, you never heard. Every jay in the whole lot put his eye to the hole and delivered a more chuckle-headed opinion about the mystery than the jay that went there before him. They examined the house all over, too. The door was standing half open, and at last one old jay happened to go and light on it and look in. Of course, that knocked the mystery galley-west in a second. There lay the acorns, scattered all over the floor. He flopped his wings and raised a whoop. 'Come here!' he says, 'Come here, everybody, hang'd if this fool hasn't been trying to fill up a house with acorns!' They all came a-swooping down like a blue cloud, and as each fellow lit on the door and took a glance, the whole absurdity of the contract that that first jay had tackled hit him home, and he fell over backward suffocating with laughter, and the next jay took his place and done the same.

"Well, sir, they roosted around here on the house-top and the trees for an hour, and guffawed over that thing like human beings. It ain't any use to tell me a bluejay hasn't got a sense of humor, because I know better. And memory, too. They brought jays here

from all over the United States to look down that hole every summer for three years. Other birds, too. And they could all see the point except an owl that come from Nova Scotia to visit the Yo Semite, and he

took this thing in on his way back. He said he couldn't see anything funny in it. But then he was a good deal disappointed about Yo Semite, too."

1880

FROM

*Life on the Mississippi*²

CHAPTER IV

The Boys' Ambition

When I was a boy, there was but one permanent ambition among my comrades in our village³ on the west bank of the Mississippi River. That was, to be a steamboatman. We had transient ambitions of other sorts, but they were only transient. When a circus came and went, it left us all burning to become clowns, the first negro minstrel show that ever came to our section left us all suffering to try that kind of life, now and then we had a hope that, if we lived and were good, God would permit us to be pirates. These ambitions faded out each in its turn, but the ambition to be a steamboatman always remained.

Once a day a cheap, gaudy packet arrived upward from St. Louis, and another downward from Keokuk. Before these events, the day was glorious with expectancy, after them, the day was a dead and empty thing. Not only the boys, but the whole village, felt this. After all these years I can picture that old time to myself now, just as it was then: the white town drowsing in the sunshine of a summer's morning, the streets empty, or pretty nearly so, one or two clerks sitting in front of the Water street stores, with their splint-bottomed chairs tilted back against the walls, 30 chins on breasts, hats slouched over their faces, asleep—with shingle shavings enough around to show what broke them down, a sow and a litter of pigs loafing along the sidewalk, doing a good business in watermelon rinds and seeds, two or three lonely little freight piles scattered about the "levee", a pile of "skids" on the slope of the stone-paved wharf, and

the fragrant town drunkard asleep in the shadow of them, two or three wood flats at the head of the wharf but nobody to listen to the peaceful lapping of the wavelets against them, the great Mississippi the majestic, the magnificent Mississippi rolling its mile wide tide along, shining in the sun, the dense forest away on the other side, the "point" above the town and the "point" below, bounding the river glimpse and turning it into a sort of sea, and withal a very still and brilliant and lonely one. Presently a film of dark smoke appears above one of those remote "points", instantly a negro drayman famous for his quick eye and prodigious voice lifts up the cry, "S-t-e-a-m boat a comin'!" and the scene changes! The town drunkard stirs, the clerks wake up, a furious clatter of drays follows, every house and store pours out a human contribution, and all in a twinkling the dead town is alive and moving. Drays, carts, men, boys, all go hurrying from many quarters to a common center, the wharf. Assembled there, the people fasten their eyes upon the coming boat as upon a wonder they are seeing for the first time. And the boat is rather a handsome sight, too. She is long and sharp and trim and pretty, she has two tall, fancy topped chimneys, with a gilded device of some kind swung between them, a fanciful pilot house, all glass and "gingerbread," perched on top of the "texas" deck behind them, the paddle boxes are gorged with a picture or with gilded rays above the boat's name, the boiler deck, the hurricane deck, and the texas deck are fenced and ornamented with clean white railings, there is a flag gallantly flying from the jack staff, the furnace doors are open and the fires glaring bravely, the upper decks are black with passengers, the captain stands by the big bell, calm, imposing, the envy of all, great volumes of the blackest smoke are rolling and tumbling out of the chimneys—a husbanded grandeur created with a bit of pitch pine just before arriving at a town, the crew are grouped on the fore-castle, the broad stage is run far out over the port

² This book, published in 1883, contains some of Mark Twain's finest writing and some of his worst. The best parts concern his own experiences, but before writing the book Mark Twain revisited the scenes and gathered a great amount of journalistic material which he incorporated into the work without regard to the unity of the whole.

The account of the club pilot's difficulties was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in the August, 1875. It is interesting with slight changes to the local *Life on the Mississippi*.

³ Hannibal, Mo.

bow, and an envied deck-hand stands picturesquely on the end of it with a coil of rope in his hand, the pent steam is screaming through the gauge-cocks, the captain lifts his hand, a bell rings, the wheels stop, then they turn back, churning the water to foam and the steamer is at rest. Then such a scramble as there is to get aboard, and to get ashore, and to take in freight and to discharge freight, all at one and the same time, and such a yelling and cursing as the mates facilitate it all with! Ten minutes later the steamer is under way again, with no flag on the jack-staff and no black smoke issuing from the chimneys. After ten more minutes the town is dead again, and the town drunkard asleep by the skids once more.

My father was a justice of the peace, and I supposed he possessed the power of life and death over all men, and could hang anybody that offended him. This was distinction enough for me as a general thing, but the desire to be a steamboatman kept intruding, nevertheless. I first wanted to be a cabin-boy, so that I could come out with a white apron on and shake a table-cloth over the side, where all my old comrades could see me, later I thought I would rather be the deck-hand who stood on the end of the stage-plank with the coil of rope in his hand, because he was particularly conspicuous. But these were only day-dreams—they were too heavenly to be contemplated as real possibilities. By and by one of our boys went away. He was not heard of for a long time. At last he turned up as apprentice engineer or "striker" on a steamboat. This thing shook the bottom out of all my Sunday-school teachings. That boy had been notoriously worldly, and I just the reverse, yet he was exalted to this eminence, and I left in obscurity and misery. There was nothing generous about this fellow in his greatness. He would always manage to have a rusty bolt to scrub while his boat tarried at our town, and he would sit on the inside guard and scrub it, where we all could see him and envy him and loathe him. And whenever his boat was laid up he would come home and swell around the town in his blackest and greasiest clothes, so that nobody could help remembering that he was a steamboatman, and he used all sorts of steamboat technicalities in his talk, as if he were so used to them that he forgot common people could not understand them. He would speak of the "labboard" side of a horse in an easy, natural way that would make one wish he was dead. And he was always talking about "St. Looy"

like an old citizen, he would refer casually to occasions when he was "coming down Fourth street," or when he was "passing by the Planter's House," or when there was a fire and he took a turn on the brakes of "the old Big Missouri", and then he would go on and he about how many towns the size of ours were burned down there that day. Two or three of the boys had long been persons of consideration among us because they had been to St. Louis once and had a vague general knowledge of its wonders, but the day of their glory was over now. They lapsed into a humble silence and learned to disappear when the ruthless "cub"-engineer approached. This fellow had money, too, and hair-oil. Also an ignorant silver watch and a showy brass watch-chain. He wore a leather belt and used no suspenders. If ever a youth was cordially admired and hated by his comrades, this one was. No girl could withstand his charms. He "cut out" every boy in the village. When his boat blew up at last, it diffused a tranquil contentment among us such as we had not known for months. But when he came home the next week, alive, renowned, and appeared in church all battered up and bandaged, a shining hero, stared at and wondered over by everybody, it seemed to us that the partiality of Providence for an undeserving reptile had reached a point where it was open to criticism.

This creature's career could produce but one result, and it speedily followed. Boy after boy managed to get on the river. The minister's son became an engineer. The doctor's and the postmaster's sons became "mud clerks", the wholesale liquor dealer's son became a barkeeper on a boat, four sons of the chief merchant, and two sons of the county judge, became pilots. Pilot was the grandest position of all. The pilot, even in those days of trivial wages, had a princely salary—from a hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty dollars a month, and no board to pay. Two months of his wages would pay a preacher's salary for a year. Now some of us were left disconsolate. We could not get on the river—at least our parents would not let us.

So, by and by, I ran away. I said I would never come home again till I was a pilot and could come in glory. But somehow I could not manage it. I went meekly aboard a few of the boats that lay packed together like sardines at the long St. Louis wharf, and humbly inquired for the pilots, but got only a cold shoulder and short words from mates and clerks

I had to make the best of this sort of treatment for the time being but I had comforting day dreams of a future when I should be a great and honored pilot, with plenty of money and could kill some of these mates and clerks and pay for them

CHAPTER V

I Want to Be a Cub Pilot

Months afterward the hope within me struggled to a reluctant death, and I found myself without an ambition. But I was ashamed to go home. I was in Cincinnati and I set to work to map out a new career. I had been reading about the recent exploration of the river Amazon by an expedition sent out by our government. It was said that the expedition, owing to difficulties, had not thoroughly explored a part of the country lying about the headwaters, some four thousand miles from the mouth of the river. It was only about fifteen hundred miles from Cincinnati to New Orleans, where I could doubtless get a ship. I had thirty dollars left, I would go and complete the exploration of the Amazon. This was all the thought I gave to the subject. I never was great in matters of detail. I packed my valise, and took passage on an ancient tub called the *Paul Jones*, for New Orleans. For the sum of sixteen dollars I had the scared and tarnished splendors of "her" main saloon principally to myself, for she was not a creature to attract the eye of wiser travelers.

When we presently got under way and went poking down the broad Ohio, I became a new being, and the subject of my own admiration. I was a traveler! A word never had tasted so good in my mouth before. I had an exultant sense of being bound for mysterious lands and distant climes which I never have felt in so uplifting a degree since. I was in such a glorified condition that all ignoble feelings departed out of me, and I was able to look down and pity the untiaveled with a compassion that had hardly a trace of contempt in it. Still, when we stopped at villages and wood-yards, I could not help lolling carelessly upon the railings of the boiler deck to enjoy the envy of the country boys on the bank. If they did not seem to discover me, I presently sneezed to attract their attention, or moved to a position where they could not help seeing me. And as soon as I knew they saw me I gaped and stretched and gave other signs of being mightily bored with traveling.

I kept my hat off all the time, and stayed where the wind and the sun could strike me because I wanted to get the bronzed and weather-beaten look of an old traveler. Before the second day was half gone I experienced a joy which filled me with the purest gratitude, for I saw that the skin had begun to blister and peel off my face and neck. I wished that the boys and girls at home could see me now.

We reached Louisville in time—at least the neighborhood of it. We stuck hard and fast on the rocks in the middle of the river and lay there four days. I was now beginning to feel a strong sense of being a part of the boat's family, a sort of infant son to the captain and younger brother to the officers. There is no estimating the pride I took in this grindeur, or the affection that began to swell and grow in me for those people. I could not know how the lordly steamboatman scorns that sort of presumption in a mere landsman. I particularly longed to acquire the least trifle of notice from the big stormy mate, and I was on the alert for an opportunity to do him a service to that end. It came at last. The riotous powwow of setting a spar was going on down on the fore-castle, and I went down there and stood around in the way—or mostly skipping out of it—till the mate suddenly roared a general order for somebody to bring him a capstan bar. I sprang to his side and said "Tell me where it is—I'll fetch it!"

If a rag picker had offered to do a diplomatic service for the Emperor of Russia, the monarch could not have been more astounded than the mate was. He even stopped swearing. He stood and stared down at me. It took him ten seconds to scrape his disjointed remains together again. Then he said impressively "Well, if this don't beat h——!" and turned to his work with the air of a man who had been confronted with a problem too abstruse for solution.

I crept away, and counted solitude for the rest of the day. I did not go to dinner. I stayed away from supper until everybody else had finished. I did not feel so much like a member of the boat's family now as before. However, my spirits returned, in installments, as we pursued our way down the river. I was sorry I hated the mate so, because it was not in (young) human nature not to admire him. He was huge and muscular, his face was bearded and whiskered all over, he had a red woman and a blue woman tattooed on his right arm—one on each side.

of a blue anchor with a red rope to it, and in the matter of profanity he was sublime. When he was getting out cargo at a landing, I was always where I could see and hear. He felt all the majesty of his great position, and made the world feel it, too. When he gave even the simplest order, he discharged it like a blast of lightning, and sent a long, reverberating peal of profanity thundering after it. I could not help contrasting the way in which the average landsman would give an order with the mate's way of doing it. If the landsman should wish the gang-plank moved a foot farther forward, he would probably say "James or William, one of you push that plank forward, please," but put the mate in his place, and he would roar out "Here, now, start that gang-plank for'ard! Lively, now! *What're* you about! *Snatch it! snatch it!* There! there! Aft again! aft again! Don't you hear me? Dash it to dash! are you going to *sleep* over it! 'Vast heaving 'Vast heaving, I tell you! Going to heave it clear astern? WHERE're you going with that barrel! *for'ard* with it 'fore I make you swallow it, you dash-dash-dash-*dashed* split between a tired mud-turtle and a crippled hearse-horse!"

I wished I could talk like that.

When the soreness of my adventure with the mate had somewhat worn off, I began timidly to make up to the humblest official connected with the boat—the night watchman. He snubbed my advances at first, but I presently ventured to offer him a new chalk pipe, and that softened him. So he allowed me to sit with him by the big bell on the hurricane deck, and in time he melted into conversation. He could not well have helped it, I hung with such homage on his words and so plainly showed that I felt honored by his notice. He told me the names of dim capes and shadowy islands as we glided by them in the solemnity of the night, under the winking stars, and by and by got to talking about himself. He seemed over-sentimental for a man whose salary was six dollars a week—or rather he might have seemed so to an older person than I. But I drank in his words hungrily, and with a faith that might have moved mountains if it had been applied judiciously. What was it to me that he was soiled and seedy and fragrant with gin? What was it to me that his grammar was bad, his construction worse, and his profanity so void of art that it was an element of weakness rather than strength in his conversation? He was a wronged

man, a man who had seen trouble, and that was enough for me. As he mellowed into his plaintive history his tears dripped upon the lantern in his lap, and I cried, too, from sympathy. He said he was the son of an English nobleman—either an earl or an alderman, he could not remember which, but believed was both, his father, the nobleman loved him, but his mother hated him from the cradle, and so while he was still a little boy he was sent to "one of them old, ancient colleges"—he couldn't remember which, and by and by his father died and his mother seized the property and "shook" him as he phrased it. After his mother shook him members of the nobility with whom he was acquainted used their influence to get him the position of "loblolly-boy in a ship", and from that point my watchman threw off all trammels of date and locality and branched out into a narrative that bristled all along with incredible adventures, a narrative that was so reeling with bloodshed, and so crammed with hairbreadth escapes and the most engaging and unconscious personal villainies, that I sat speechless, enjoying, shuddering, wondering, worshipping.

It was a sore blight to find out afterward that he was a low, vulgar, ignorant, sentimental, half-witted humbug, an untraveled native of the wilds of Illinois, who had absorbed wildcat literature and appropriated its marvels, until in time he had woven odds and ends of the mess into this yarn, and then gone on telling it to fledglings like me, until he had come to believe it himself.

CHAPTER VI

A Cub-pilot's Experience

What with lying on the rocks four days at Louisville, and some other delays, the poor old *Paul Jones* fooled away about two weeks in making the voyage from Cincinnati to New Orleans. This gave me a chance to get acquainted with one of the pilots, and he taught me how to steer the boat, and thus made the fascination of river life more potent than ever for me.

It also gave me a chance to get acquainted with a youth who had taken deck passage—more's the pity; for he easily borrowed six dollars of me on a promise to return to the boat and pay it back to me the day after we should arrive. But he probably died or forgot, for he never came. It was doubtless the former,

since he had said his parents were wealthy and he only traveled deck passage because it was cooler *

I soon discovered two things. One was that a vessel would not be likely to sail for the mouth of the Amazon under ten or twelve years, and the other was that the nine or ten dollars still left in my pocket would not suffice for so impossible an exploration as I had planned, even if I could afford to wait for a ship. Therefore it followed that I must contrive a new career. The *Paul Jones* was now bound for St. Louis. I planned a siege against my pilot, and at the end of three hard days he surrendered. He agreed to teach me the Mississippi River from New Orleans to St. Louis for five hundred dollars, payable out of the first wages I should receive after graduating. I entered upon the small enterprise of "learning" twelve or thirteen hundred miles of the great Mississippi River with the easy confidence of my time of life. If I had really known what I was about to require of my faculties, I should not have had the courage to begin. I supposed that all a pilot had to do was to keep his boat in the river, and I did not consider that that could be much of a trick, since it was so wide.

The boat backed out from New Orleans at four in the afternoon, and it was "our watch" until eight. Mr. Bixby, my chief, "straightened her up," ploughed her along past the sterns of the other boats that lay at the Levee, and then said, "Here, take her, shave those steamships as close as you'd peel an apple." I took the wheel, and my heart beat fluttered up into the hundreds, for it seemed to me that we were about to scrape the side off every ship in the line, we were so close. I held my breath and began to claw the boat away from the danger, and I had my own opinion of the pilot who had known no better than to get us into such peril. But I was too wise to express it. In half a minute I had a wide margin of safety intervening between the *Paul Jones* and the ships, and within ten seconds more I was set aside in disgrace, and Mr. Bixby was going into danger again and flaying me alive with abuse of my cowardice. I was stung, but I was obliged to admire the easy confidence with which my chief loafed from side to side of his wheel, and trimmed the ships so closely that disaster seemed incessantly imminent. When he had cooled a little he told me that the easy water was close ashore and the current outside, and the more we must hug the bank, upstream, to get the benefit of the former and stay

well out, down stream, to take advantage of the latter. In my own mind I resolved to be a down stream pilot and leave the up streaming to people dead to prudence.

Now and then Mr. Bixby called my attention to certain things. Said he, "This is Six Mile Point." I assented. It was pleasant enough information, but I could not see the bearing of it. I was not conscious that it was a matter of any interest to me. Another time he said, "This is Nine Mile Point." Later he said "This is Twelve Mile Point." They were all about level with the water's edge, they all looked about alike to me, they were monotonously unpicturesque. I hoped Mr. Bixby would change the subject. But no, he would crowd up around a point, hugging the shore with affection and then say "The slack water ends here, abreast this bunch of China trees, now we cross over." So he crossed over. He gave me the wheel once or twice, but I had no luck. I either came near chipping off the edge of a sugar plantation, or I waded too far from shore, and so dropped back into disgrace again and got abused.

The watch was ended at last, and we took supper and went to bed. At midnight the glare of a lantern shone in my eyes, and the night watchman said

"Come, turn out!"

And then he left. I could not understand this extraordinary procedure, so I presently gave up trying to, and dozed off to sleep. Pretty soon the watchman was back again, and this time he was gruff. I was annoyed. I said

"What do you want to come bothering around here in the middle of the night for? Now, as like as not, I'll not get to sleep again to-night."

The watchman said

"Well, if this ain't good, I'm blessed."

The "off watch" was just turning in, and I heard some brutal laughter from them, and such remarks as "Hello, watchman! Aint the new cub turned out yet? He's delicate, likely. Give him some sugar in a rag, and send for the chambermaid to sing 'Rock a by Baby' to him."

About this time Mr. Bixby appeared on the scene. Something like a minute later I was climbing the ladder with some of my clothes on and the watchman behind me. Mr. Bixby was close behind, commenting. Here was something fresh—this thing of getting up in the middle of the night to go to work. It

* "Deck passage, i. e., steerage passage."

was a detail in piloting that had never occurred to me at all. I knew that boats ran all night, but somehow I had never happened to reflect that somebody had to get up out of a warm bed to run them. I began to fear that piloting was not quite so romantic as I had imagined it was, there was something very real and worklike about this new phase of it.

It was a rather dingy night, although a fair number of stars were out. The big mate was at the wheel, and he had the old tub pointed at a star and was holding her straight up the middle of the river. The shores on either hand were not much more than half a mile apart, but they seemed wonderfully far away and ever so vague and indistinct. The mate said:

"We've got to land at Jones' plantation, sir."

The vengeful spirit in me exulted. I said to myself, "I wish you joy of your job, Mr. Bixby, you'll have a good time finding Mr. Jones' plantation such a night as this, and I hope you never will find it as long as you live."

Mr. Bixby said to the mate:

"Upper end of the plantation, or the lower?"

"Upper."

"I can't do it. The stumps there are out of water at this stage. It's no great distance to the lower, and you'll have to get along with that."

"All right, sir. If Jones don't like it, he'll have to lump it, I reckon."

And then the mate left. My exultation began to cool and my wonder to come up. Here was a man who not only proposed to find this plantation on such a night, but to find either end of it you preferred. I dreadfully wanted to ask a question, but I was carrying about as many short answers as my cargo-room would admit of, so I held my peace. All I desired to ask Mr. Bixby was the simple question whether he was ass enough to really imagine he was going to find that plantation on a night when all plantations were exactly alike and all of the same color. But I held in. I used to have fine inspirations of prudence in those days.

Mr. Bixby made for the shore and soon was scraping it, just the same as if it had been daylight. And not only that, but singing:

Father in heaven, the day is declining, etc.

It seemed to me that I had put my life in the keeping of a peculiarly reckless outcast. Presently he turned on me and said:

"What's the name of the first point above New Orleans?"

I was gratified to be able to answer promptly, and I did. I said I didn't know.

"Don't know?"

This manner jolted me. I was down at the foot again, in a moment. But I had to say just what I had said before.

"Well, you're a smart one!" said Mr. Bixby.

"What's the name of the next point?"

Once more I didn't know.

Well, this beats anything. Tell me the name of any point or place I told you."

I studied a while and decided that I couldn't.

"Look here! What do you start out from, above Twelve-Mile Point, to cross over?"

"I—I—don't know."

"You—you—don't know?" mimicking my drawing manner of speech. "What do you know?"

"I—I—nothing, for certain."

"By the great Cæsar's ghost, I believe you! You're the stupidest dunderhead I ever saw or ever heard of, so help me Moses! The idea of *you* being a pilot—you! Why, you don't know enough to pilot a cow down a lane."

Oh, but his wrath was up! He was a nervous man, and he shuffled from one side of his wheel to the other as if the floor was hot. He would boil a while to himself, and then overflow and scald me again.

"Look here! What do you suppose I told you the names of those points for?"

I tremblingly considered a moment, and then the devil of temptation provoked me to say:

"Well—to—to—be entertaining, I thought."

This was a red rag to the bull. He raged and stormed so (he was crossing the river at the time) that I judge it made him blind, because he ran over the steering-oar of a trading-scow. Of course the traders sent up a volley of red-hot profanity. Never was a man so grateful as Mr. Bixby was; because he was brimful, and here were subjects who could *talk back*. He threw open a window, thrust his head out, and such an irruption followed as I never had heard before. The fainter and farther away the scowmen's curses drifted, the higher Mr. Bixby lifted his voice and the weightier his adjectives grew. When he closed the window he was empty. You could have drawn a seine through his system and not caught

curses enough to disturb your mother with. Presently he said to me in the gentlest way:

"My boy, you must get a little memorandum book and every time I tell you a thing put it down right away. There's only one way to be a pilot, and that is to get this entire river by heart. You have to know it just like A B C."

That was a dismal revelation to me, for my memory was never loaded with anything but blank cartridges. However, I did not feel discouraged long. I judged that it was best to make some allowances for doubtless Mr. Bixby was "stretching." Presently he pulled a rope and struck a few strokes on the big bell. The stars were all gone now, and the night was as black as ink. I could hear the wheels churn along the bank, but I was not entirely certain that I could see the shore. The voice of the invisible watchman called up from the hurricane deck:

"What's this, sir?"

"Jones' plantation."

I said to myself, "I wish I might venture to offer a small bet that it isn't." But I did not chirp. I only waited to see Mr. Bixby handled the engine-bells, and in due time the boat's nose came to the land, a torch glowed from the fore-castle, a man skipped ashore, a driver's voice on the bank said, "Gimme de k'arpet bag, Mass' Jones," and the next moment we were standing up the river again, all serene. I reflected deeply a while, and then said—but not aloud—"Well, the finding of that plantation was the luckiest accident that ever happened, but it couldn't happen again in a hundred years." And I fully believed it was an accident, too.

By the time we had gone seven or eight hundred miles up the river, I had learned to be a tolerably plucky up-stream steersman, in daylight, and before we reached St. Louis I had made a trifle of progress in night work, but only a trifle. I had a note book that faintly bustled with the names of towns, "points," bars, islands, bends, reaches, etc., but the information was to be found only in the note book—none of it was in my head. It made my heart ache to think I had only got half of the river set down, for as our watch was four hours off and four hours on, day and night, there was a long four-hour gap in my book for every time I had slept since the voyage began.

My chief was presently hired to go on a big New Orleans boat, and I packed my satchel and went with him. She was a grand affair. When I stood in her

pilot house I was so far above the water that I seemed perched on a mountain, and her decks stretched so far away, fore and aft, below me, that I wondered how I could ever have considered the little *Paul Jones* a large craft. There were other differences, too. The *Paul Jones'* pilot house was a cheap, dingy, battered rattletrap, cramped for room, but here was a sumptuous glass temple, room enough to have a dance in, showy red and gold window-curtains, an imposing sofa, leather cushions and a back to the high bench where visiting pilots sit, to spin yarns and "look at the river," bright, fanciful "cuspidors," instead of a broad wooden box filled with sawdust, nice new oil cloth on the floor, a hospitable big stove for winter, a wheel as high as my head, costly with inlaid work, a wire tiller rope, bright brass knobs for the bells, and a tidy, white aproned, black "texas-tender," to bring up tarts and ices and coffee during mid watch, day and night. Now this was "something like," and so I began to take heart once more to believe that piloting was a romantic sort of occupation after all. The moment we were under way I began to prow about the great steamer and fill myself with joy. She was as clean and as dainty as a drawing-room, when I looked down her long, gilded saloon, it was like gazing through a splendid tunnel, she had an oil picture, by some gifted sign-painter, on every state-room door, she glittered with no end of prism fringed chandeliers, the clerk's office was elegant, the bar was marvelous, and the barkeeper had been barbered and upholstered at incredible cost. The boiler-deck (i.e., the second story of the boat, so to speak), was as spacious as a church, it seemed to me, so with the fore-castle, and there was no pitiful handful of deck hands, firemen, and roustabouts down there, but a whole battalion of men. The fires were fiercely glaucing from a long row of furnaces, and over them were eight huge boilers! This was unutterable pomp. The mighty engines—but enough of this. I had never felt so fine before. And when I found that the regiment of natty servants respectfully "sir'd" me, my satisfaction was complete.

FROM

CHAPTER XIII

A Pilot's Needs

When an apprentice has become pretty thoroughly acquainted with the river, he goes clattering along so fearlessly with his steamboat, night or day,

that he presently begins to imagine that it is *his* courage that animates him, but the first time the pilot steps out and leaves him to his own devices he finds out it was the other man's. He discovers that the article has been left out of his own cargo altogether. The whole river is bristling with exigencies in a moment, he is not prepared for them, he does not know how to meet them, all his knowledge forsakes him, and within fifteen minutes he is as white as a sheet and scared almost to death. Therefore 10 pilots wisely train these cubs by various strategic tricks to look danger in the face a little more calmly. A favorite way of theirs is to play a friendly swindle upon the candidate.

Mr Bixby served me in this fashion once, and for years afterward I used to blush, even in my sleep, when I thought of it. I had become a good steersman, so good, indeed, that I had all the work to do on our watch, night and day. Mr Bixby seldom made a suggestion to me, all he ever did was to take 20 the wheel on particularly bad nights or in particularly bad crossings, land the boat when she needed to be landed, play gentleman of leisure nine-tenths of the watch, and collect the wages. The lower river was about bank-full, and if anybody had questioned my ability to run any crossing between Cairo and New Orleans without help or instruction, I should have felt irreparably hurt. The idea of being afraid of any crossing in the lot, in the *daytime*, was a thing too preposterous for contemplation. Well, one matchless 30 summer's day I was bowling down the bend above Island 66, brimful of self-conceit and carrying my nose as high as a giraffe's, when Mr Bixby said:

"I am going below a while. I suppose you know the next crossing?"

This was almost an affront. It was about the plainest and simplest crossing in the whole river. One couldn't come to any harm, whether he ran it right or not, and as for depth there never had been any bottom there. I knew all this, perfectly well. 40

"Know how to *run* it? Why, I can run it with my eyes shut."

"How much water is there in it?"

"Well, that is an odd question. I couldn't get bottom there with a church steeple."

"You think so, do you?"

The very tone of the question shook my confidence. That was what Mr Bixby was expecting. He left, without saying anything more. I began to imagine

all sorts of things. Mr Bixby, unknown to me, of course, sent somebody down to the fore-castle with some mysterious instructions to the leadsmen, another messenger was sent to whisper among the officers and then Mr Bixby went into hiding behind a smoke-stack where he could observe results. Presently the captain stepped out on the hurricane deck, next the chief mate appeared, then a clerk. Every moment or two a straggler was added to my audience, and before I got to the head of the island I had fifteen or twenty people assembled down there under my nose. I began to wonder what the trouble was. As I started across, the captain glanced aloft at me and said, with a sham uneasiness in his voice:

"Where is Mr Bixby?"

"Gone below, sir."

But that did the business for me. My imagination began to construct dangers out of nothing and they multiplied faster than I could keep the run of them. All at once I imagined I saw shoal water ahead! The wave of coward agony that surged through me then came near dislocating every joint in me. All my confidence in that crossing vanished. I seized the bell-rope, dropped it, ashamed, seized it again, dropped it once more, clutched it tremblingly once again, and pulled it so feebly that I could hardly hear the stroke myself. Captain and mate sang out instantly, and both together:

"Starboard lead there! and quick about it!"

Thus was another shock. I began to climb the wheel like a squirrel but I would hardly get the boat started to port before I would see new dangers on that side, and away I would spin to the other, only to find perils accumulating to starboard, and be crazy to get to port again. Then came the leadsmen's sepulchral cry:

"D-e-e-p four!"

Deep four in a bottomless crossing! The terror of it took my breath away.

"M-a-r-k three! M-a-r-k three! Quarter-less-three! Half twain!"

This was frightful! I seized the bell-ropes and stopped the engines.

"Quarter twain! Quarter twain! Mark twain!"

I was helpless. I did not know what in the world to do. I was quaking from head to foot, and I could have hung my hat on my eyes, they stuck out so far.

"Quarter-less-twain! Nine-and-a-half!"

We were *drawing* nine! My hands were in a nerveless flutter I could not ring a bell intelligibly with them I flew to the speaking-tube and shouted to the engineer

'Oh, Ben, if you love me, *back* her! Quick, Ben! Oh, back the immortal *soul* out of her!'

I heard the door close gently I looked around, and there stood Mr Bixby, smiling a bland, sweet smile Then the audience on the hurricane deck sent up a thundergust of humiliating laughter I saw it all, now, and I felt meaner than the meanest man in human history I laid in the lead, set the boat in her marks, came ahead on the engines and said

"It was a fine trick to play on an orphan, *wasn't* it? I suppose I'll never hear the last of how I was ass enough to heave the lead at the head of 66"

"Well, no, you won't, maybe In fact I hope you won't, for I want you to learn something by that experience Didn't you *know* there was no bottom in that crossing?"

"Yes, sir, I did"

"Very well, then You shouldn't have allowed me or anybody else to shake your confidence in that knowledge Try to remember that And another thing when you get into a dangerous place, don't turn coward That isn't going to help matters any"

It was a good enough lesson, but pretty hardly learned Yet about the hardest part of it was that for months I so often had to hear a phrase which I had conceived a particular distaste for It was, "Oh, Ben, if you love me, back her!"

1875-1882

1883

The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg ⁴

I

It was many years ago Hadleyburg was the most honest and upright town in all the region round about It had kept that reputation unsmirched during three generations, and was prouder of it than of any other of its possessions It was so proud of it, and so anxious to insure its perpetuation, that it began to teach the principles of honest dealing to its babies in the cradle, and made the like teachings the staple of their culture thenceforward through all the years devoted to their education Also, throughout the formative years temptations were kept out of the way of the young people, so that their honesty could have every chance to harden and solidify, and become a part of their very bone The neighboring towns were jealous of this honorable supremacy and affected to sneer at Hadleyburg's pride in it and call it vanity, but all the same they were obliged to

acknowledge that Hadleyburg was in reality an incorruptible town, and if pressed they would also acknowledge that the mere fact that a young man hailed from Hadleyburg was all the recommendation he needed when he went forth from his natal town to seek for responsible employment

But at last, in the drift of time, Hadleyburg had the ill luck to offend a passing stranger—possibly without knowing it, certainly without caring, for Hadleyburg was sufficient unto itself, and cared not a rap for strangers or their opinions Still, it would have been well to make an exception in this one's case, for he was a bitter man and revengeful All through his wanderings during a whole year he kept his injury in mind, and gave all his leisure moments to trying to invent a compensating satisfaction for it He contrived many plans, and all of them were good, but none of them was quite sweeping enough the poorest of them would hurt a great many individuals, but what he wanted was a plan which would comprehend the entire town, and not let so much as one person escape unhurt At last he had a fortunate idea, and when it fell into his brain it lit up his whole head with an evil joy He began to form a plan at once, saying to himself, "That is the thing to do—I will corrupt the town"

Six months later he went to Hadleyburg, and arrived in a buggy at the house of the old cashier of the bank about ten at night He got a sack out

⁴ From *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg and Other Stories* by Mark Twain Published by Harper & Brothers Copyright 1900 by Oliver L. Clemens copyright 1928 by Clara Clemens Gahler

This story was published in *Harper's Magazine*, December, 1899, and reprinted in *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg and Other Stories* 1900 The theory has been advanced that the town Mark Twain had in mind was Oberlin, Ohio, which had been cool to him and receptive to George W. Cable, when both men spoke there on a joint program But probably there was no prototype The story was a product of Mark Twain's most pessimistic period but artistically it is probably his best short story I am indebted to the kind permission of Harper & Brothers

of the buggy, shouldered it, and staggered with it through the cottage yard, and knocked at the door. A woman's voice said "Come in," and he entered, and set his sack behind the stove in the parlor, saying politely to the old lady who sat reading the *Missionary Herald* by the lamp.

"Pray keep your seat, madam, I will not disturb you. There—now it is pretty well concealed, one would hardly know it was there. Can I see your husband a moment, madam?"

No, he was gone to Brixton, and might not return before morning.

"Very well, madam, it is no matter. I merely wanted to leave that sack in his care, to be delivered to the rightful owner when he shall be found. I am a stranger, he does not know me, I am merely passing through the town to-night to discharge a matter which has been long in my mind. My errand is now completed, and I go pleased and a little proud, and you will never see me again. There is a paper attached to the sack which will explain everything. Good-night, madam."

The old lady was afraid of the mysterious big stranger, and was glad to see him go. But her curiosity was roused, and she went straight to the sack and brought away the paper. It began as follows:

TO BE PUBLISHED, or, the right man sought out by private inquiry—either will answer. This sack contains gold coin weighing a hundred and sixty pounds four ounces—

"Mercy on us, and the door not locked!"

Mrs. Richards flew to it all in a tremble and locked it, then pulled down the window-shades and stood frightened, worried, and wondering if there was anything else she could do toward making herself and the money more safe. She listened awhile for burglars, then surrendered to curiosity and went back to the lamp and finished reading the paper:

I am a foreigner and am presently going back to my own country, to remain there permanently. I am grateful to America for what I have received at her hands during my long stay under her flag, and to one of her citizens—a citizen of Hadleyburg—I am especially grateful for a great kindness done me a year or two ago. Two great kindnesses, in fact. I will explain. I was a gambler. I say I was. I was a ruined gambler. I arrived in this village at night, hungry and without a penny. I asked for help—in the dark, I was ashamed to beg in the light. I begged of the right man. He gave me twenty dollars—that is to say, he gave me life, as I considered it. He also gave me fortune; for out of that money I have made myself rich at the gaming-table. And

finally, a remark which he made to me has remained with me to this day, and has at last conquered me, and in conquering has saved the remnant of my morals. I shall gamble no more. Now I have no idea who that man was, but I want him found, and I want him to have this money, to give away, throw away or keep, as he pleases. It is merely my way of testifying my gratitude to him. If I could stav. I would find him myself, but no matter, he will be found. This is an honest town, an incorruptible town, and I know I can trust it without fear. This man can be identified by the remark which he made to me, I feel persuaded that he will remember it.

And now my plan is this. If you prefer to conduct the inquiry privately, do so. Tell the contents of this present writing to any one who is likely to be the right man. If he shall answer, I am the man, the remark I made was so and so, apply the test—to wit, open the sack, and in it you will find a sealed envelope containing that remark. If the remark mentioned by the candidate tallies with it, give him the money, and ask no further questions, for he is certainly the right man.

But if you shall prefer a public inquiry, then publish this present writing in the local paper—with these instructions added, to wit: Thirty days from now, let the candidate appear at the town-hall at eight in the evening (Friday), and hand his remark, in a sealed envelope, to the Rev. Mr. Burgess (if he will be kind enough to act), and let Mr. Burgess there and then destroy the seals of the sack, open it, and see if the remark is correct, if correct, let the money be delivered, with my sincere gratitude, to my benefactor thus identified.

Mrs. Richards sat down, gently quivering with excitement, and was soon lost in thoughts—after this pattern: "What a strange thing it is! . . . And what a fortune for that kind man who set his bread afloat upon the waters! . . . If it had only been my husband that did it!—for we are so poor, so old and poor! . . ." Then, with a sigh—"But it was not my Edward; no, it was not he that gave a stranger twenty dollars. It is a pity too, I see it now. . . ." Then, with a shudder—"But it is gambler's money! the wages of sin, we couldn't take it, we couldn't touch it. I don't like to be near it; it seems a defilement." She moved to a farther chair. "I wish Edward would come, and take it to the bank, a burglar might come at any moment, it is dreadful to be here all alone with it."

At eleven Mr. Richards arrived, and while his wife was saying, "I am so glad you've come!" he was saying, "I'm so tired—tired clear out; it is dreadful to be poor, and have to make these dismal journeys at my time of life. Always at the grind, grind, grind, on a salary—another man's slave, and he sitting at home in his slippers, rich and comfortable."

I am so sorry for you Edward, you know that, but be comforted we have our livelihood, we have our good name—'

"Yes, MARY, and that is everything. Don't mind my talk—it's just a moment's irritation and doesn't mean anything. Kiss me—there, it's all gone now, and I am not complaining any more. What have you been getting? What's in the sack?"

Then his wife told him the great secret. It dazed him for a moment, then he said

"It weighs a hundred and sixty pounds? Why, MARY, it's forty thousand dollars—think of it—a whole fortune! Not ten men in this village are worth that much. Give me the paper."

He skimmed through it and said

"Isn't it an adventure! Why, it's a romance, it's like the impossible things one reads about in books, and never sees in life." He was well stirred up now, cheerful, even gleeful. He tipped his old wife on the cheek and said, humorously, "Why we're rich, MARY, rich, all we've got to do is to bury the money and burn the papers. If the gambler ever comes to inquire, we'll merely look coldly upon him and say 'What is this nonsense you are talking? We have never heard of you and your sack of gold before,' and then he would look foolish, and—"

"And in the mean time, while you are running on with your jokes, the money is still here, and it is fast getting along toward burglar-time."

"True. Very well, what shall we do—make the inquiry private? No, not that, it would spoil the romance. The public method is better. Think what a noise it will make! And it will make all the other towns jealous, for no stranger would trust such a thing to any town but Hadleyburg, and they know it. It's a great card for us. I must get to the printing-office now, or I shall be too late."

"But stop—stop—don't leave me here alone with it, Edward!"

But he was gone. For only a little while, how ever. Not far from his own house he met the editor-proprietor of the paper and gave him the document, and said, "Here is a good thing for you, Cox—put it in."

"It may be too late, Mr. Richards, but I'll see."

At home again he and his wife sat down to talk the charming mystery over, they were in no condition for sleep. The first question was, Who could the citizen have been who gave the stranger the twenty

dollars? It seemed a simple one, both answered it in the same breath—

"Birelay Goodson."

"Yes," said Richards, "he could have done it, and it would have been like him, but there's not another in the town."

"Everybody will grant that Edward—grant it privately anyway. For six months now the village has been its own proper self once more—honest, 10 narrow, self righteous, and stingy."

"It is what he always called it to the day of his death—said it right out publicly too."

"Yes, and he was hated for it."

"Oh, of course, but he didn't care. I reckon he was the best hated man among us, except the Reverend Burgess."

"Well, Burgess deserves it—he will never get another congregation here. Mean as the town is, it knows how to estimate *him*. Edward, doesn't it seem odd that the stranger should appoint Burgess to deliver the money?"

"Well, yes—it does. That is—that is—"

"Why so much that is *ing*? Would *you* select him?"

"Mary, maybe the stranger knows him better than this village does."

"Much *that* would help Burgess!"

The husband seemed perplexed for an answer, the wife kept a steady eye upon him, and waited. Finally Richards said, with the hesitancy of one who is making a statement which is likely to encounter doubt,

"Mary, Burgess is not a bad man."

His wife was certainly surprised.

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed.

"He is not a bad man. I know. The whole of his unpopularity had its foundation in that one thing—the thing that made so much noise."

"That 'one thing,' indeed! As if that 'one thing' wasn't enough, all by itself."

"Plenty. Plenty. Only he wasn't guilty of it."

"How you talk! Not guilty of it! Everybody knows he *was* guilty."

"Mary, I give you my word—he was innocent."

"I can't believe it, and I don't. How do you know?"

"It is a confession. I am ashamed, but I will make it. I was the only man who knew he was innocent. I could have saved him, and—and—well, you know how the town was wrought up—I hadn't the pluck

to do it. It would have turned everybody against me. I felt mean, ever so mean, but I didn't dare, I hadn't the manliness to face that."

Mary looked troubled, and for a while was silent. Then she said, stammeringly

"I—I didn't think it would have done for you to—to— One mustn't—er—public opinion—one has to be so careful—so—" It was a difficult road, and she got mired, but after a little she got started again. "It was a great pity, but— Why, we couldn't afford to do it, Edward—we couldn't indeed. Oh, I wouldn't have had you do it for anything!"

"It would have lost us the good-will of so many people, Mary, and then—and then—"

"What troubles me now is, what *he* thinks of us, Edward."

"He? *He* doesn't suspect that I could have saved him."

"Oh," exclaimed the wife, in a tone of relief, "I am glad of that. As long as he doesn't know that you could have saved him, he—he—well, that makes it a great deal better. Why, I might have known he didn't know, because he is always trying to be friendly with us, as little encouragement as we give him. More than once people have twitted me with it. There's the Wilsons, and the Wilcoxes, and the Harknesses, they take a mean pleasure in saying, '*Your friend Burgess*,' because they know it pesters me. I wish he wouldn't persist in liking us so, I can't think why he keeps it up."

"I can explain it. It's another confession. When the thing was new and hot, and the town made a plan to ride him on a rail, my conscience hurt me so that I couldn't stand it, and I went privately and gave him notice, and he got out of the town and staid out till it was safe to come back."

"Edward! If the town had found it out—"

"Don't! It scares me yet, to think of it. I repented of it the minute it was done, and I was even afraid to tell you, lest your face might betray it to somebody. I didn't sleep any that night, for worrying. But after a few days I saw that no one was going to suspect me, and after that I got to feeling glad I did it. And I feel glad yet, Mary—glad through and through."

"So do I, now, for it would have been a dreadful way to treat him. Yes, I'm glad; for really you did owe him that, you know. But, Edward, suppose it should come out yet, some day!"

"It won't."

"Why?"

"Because everybody thinks it was Goodson."

"Of course they would."

"Certainly. And of course *he* didn't care. They persuaded poor old Sawlsberry to go and charge it on him, and he went blustering over there and did it. Goodson looked him over like as if he was hunting for a place on him that he could despise the most, then he says, 'So you are the Committee of Inquiry, are you?' Sawlsberry said that was about what he was. Him. Do they require particulars, or do you reckon a kind of a *general* answer will do?" If they require particulars, I will come back. Mr Goodson, I will take the general answer first.' 'Very well then, tell them to go to hell—I reckon that's general enough. And I'll give you some advice, Sawlsberry, when you come back for the particulars, fetch a basket to carry the relics of yourself home."

"Just like Goodson; it's got all the marks. He had only one vanity, he thought he could give advice better than any other person."

"It settled the business, and saved us, Mary. The subject was dropped."

"Bless you. I'm not doubting *that*."

Then they took up the gold-sack mystery again, with strong interest. Soon the conversation began to suffer breaks—interruptions caused by absorbed thoughts. The breaks grew more and more frequent. At last Richards lost himself wholly in thought. He sat long, gazing vacantly at the floor, and by-and-by he began to punctuate his thoughts with little nervous movements of his hands that seemed to indicate vexation. Meantime his wife too had relapsed into a thoughtful silence, and her movements were beginning to show a troubled discomfort. Finally Richards got up and strode aimlessly about the room, ploughing his hands through his hair, much as a somnambulist might do who was having a bad dream. Then he seemed to arrive at a definite purpose, and without a word he put on his hat and passed quickly out of the house. His wife sat brooding, with a drawn face, and did not seem to be aware that she was alone. Now and then she murmured, "Lead us not into t. . . but—but—we are so poor, so poor! . . . Lead us not into. . . Ah, who would be hurt by it?—and no one would ever know. . . Lead us. . ."

The voice died out in mumblings. After a little she

glanced up and muttered in a half-frightened, half glad way—

'He is gone! But, oh dear! he may be too late—too late. Maybe not—maybe there is still time.' She rose and stood thinking nervously clasping and unclasping her hands. A slight shudder shook her frame, and she said, out of a dry throat, "God forgive me—it's awful to think such things—but Lord, how we are made—how strangely we are made!"

She turned the light low and slipped stealthily over and knelt down by the sack and felt of its ridgy sides with her hands, and fondled them lovingly, and there was a glowing light in her poor old eyes. She fell into fits of absence, and came half out of them at times to mutter, 'If we had only waited!—oh, if we had only waited a little, and not been in such a hurry!"

Meantime Cox had gone home from his office and told his wife all about the strange thing that had happened, and they had talked it over eagerly, and guessed that the late Goodson was the only man in the town who could have helped a suffering stranger with so noble a sum as twenty dollars. Then there was a pause, and the two became thoughtful and silent. And by and by nervous and fidgety. At last the wife said, as if to herself,

"Nobody knows this secret but the Richardses and us—nobody."

The husband came out of his thinkings with a slight start, and gazed wistfully at his wife, whose face was become very pale, then he hesitatingly rose, and glanced furtively at his hat, then at his wife—a sort of mute inquiry. Mrs. Cox swallowed once or twice, with her hand at her throat, then in place of speech she nodded her head. In a moment she was alone, and mumbling to herself.

And now Richards and Cox were hurrying through the deserted streets, from opposite directions. They met, panting, at the foot of the printing office stairs, by the night light there they read each other's face. Cox whispered,

"Nobody knows about this but us?"

The whispered answer was,

"Not a soul—on honor, not a soul!"

"If it isn't too late to—"

The men were starting up stairs, at this moment they were overtaken by a boy, and Cox asked,

"Is that you, Johnny?"

"Yes sir."

"You needn't ship the early mail—nor *any* mail, wait till I tell you."

"It's already gone sir."

"Gone?" It had the sound of an unspeakable disappointment in it.

"Yes sir. Time table for Brixton and all the towns beyond changed to day, sir—had to get the papers in twenty minutes earlier than common. I had to rush, if I had been two minutes later—"

The men turned and walked slowly away, not waiting to hear the rest. Neither of them spoke during ten minutes, then Cox said, in a vexed tone,

"What possessed you to be in such a hurry, I can't make out."

The answer was humble enough.

"I see it now, but somehow I never thought, you know, until it was too late. But the next time—"

"Next time be hanged! It won't come in a thousand years."

Then the friends separated without a good-night, and dragged themselves home with the gait of mortally stricken men. At their homes their wives sprang up with an eager "Well?"—then saw the answer with their eyes and sank down sorrowing, without waiting for it to come in words. In both houses a discussion followed of a heated sort—a new thing, there had been discussions before, but not heated ones, not ungentle ones. The discussions to night were a sort of seeming plagiarisms of each other. Mrs. Richards said,

"If you had only waited, Edward—if you had only stopped to think, but no, you must run straight to the printing office and spread it all over the world."

"It *said* publish it."

"That is nothing, it also said do it privately, if you liked. There, now—is that true, or not?"

"Why, yes—yes, it is true, but when I thought what a stu it would make, and what a compliment it was to Hadleyburg that a stranger should trust it so—"

"Oh, certainly, I know all that, but if you had only stopped to think, you would have seen that you *couldn't* find the right man, because he is in his grave, and hasn't left chick nor child nor relation behind him, and as long as the money went to some body that awfully needed it, and nobody would be hurt by it, and—and—"

She broke down, crying Her husband tried to think of some comforting thing to say, and presently came out with this

"But after all, Mary, it must be for the best—it *must* be, we know that And we must remember that it was so ordered—"

"Ordered! Oh, everything's *ordered*, when a person has to find some way out when he has been stupid Just the same, it was *ordered* that the money should come to us in this special way, and it was 10 you that must take it on yourself to go meddling with the designs of Providence—and who gave you the right? It was wicked, that is what it was—just blasphemous presumption and no more becoming to a meek and humble professor of—"

"But, Marv, you know how we have been trained all our lives long, like the whole village, till it is absolutely second nature to us to stop not a single moment to think when there's an honest thing to be done—"

"Oh, I know it, I know it—it's been one everlasting training and training and training in honesty—honesty shielded, from the very cradle, against every possible temptation. and so it's *artificial* honesty, and weak as water when temptation comes, as we have seen this night God knows I never had shade nor shadow of a doubt of my petrified and indestructible honesty until now—and now, under the very first big and real temptation, I—Edward, it is my belief that this town's honesty is as rotten 30 as mine is, as rotten as yours is. It is a mean town, a hard, stingy town, and hasn't a virtue in the world but this honesty it is so celebrated for and so concerted about, and so help me, I do believe that if ever the day comes that its honesty falls under great temptation, its grand reputation will go to ruin like a house of cards. There, now, I've made confession, and I feel better, I am a humbug, and I've been one all my life, without knowing it. Let no man call me honest again—I will not have it."

"I— Well, Mary, I feel a good deal as you do; I certainly do. It seems strange, too, so strange. I never could have believed it—never."

A long silence followed, both were sunk in thought At last the wife looked up and said,

"I know what you are thinking, Edward."

Richards had the embarrassed look of a person who is caught.

"I am ashamed to confess it, Marv, but—"

"It's no matter, Edward. I was thinking the same question myself"

"I hope so State it"

"You were thinking, if a body could only guess out *what the remark* was that Goodson made to the stranger"

"It's perfectly true I feel guilty and ashamed And you?"

"I'm past it Let us make a pallet here, we've got to stand watch till the bank vault opens in the morning and admits the sack Oh, dear, oh, dear— if we hadn't made the mistake!"

The pallet was made, and Marv said

"The open sesame—what could it have been? I do wonder what that remark could have been? But come, we will get to bed now"

"And sleep?"

"No, think"

20 "Yes, think."

By this time the Coxes too had completed their spat and their reconciliation, and were turning in—to think, to think, and toss, and fret, and worry over what the remark could possibly have been which Goodson made to the stranded derelict that golden remark, that remark worth forty thousand dollars cash.

The reason that the village telegraph-office was open later than usual that night was this The foreman of Cox's paper was the local representative of the Associated Press One might say its honorary representative, for it wasn't four times a year that he could furnish thirty words that would be accepted But this time it was different His despatch stating what he had caught got an instant answer.

Send the whole thing—all the details—twelve hundred words.

A colossal order! The foreman filled the bill; and 40 he was the proudest man in the State By breakfast-time the next morning the name of Hadleyburg the Incorruptible was on every lip in America, from Montreal to the Gulf, from the glaciers of Alaska to the orange-groves of Florida, and millions and millions of people were discussing the stranger and his money-sack, and wondering if the right man would be found, and hoping some more news about the matter would come soon—right away

II

Hadleyburg village woke up world celebrated—as tonished—happy—vain Vain beyond imagination Its nineteen principal citizens and their wives went about shaking hands with each other, and beaming, and smiling, and congratulating and saying *this* thing adds a new word to the dictionary—*Hadleyburg*, synonym for *incorruptible*—destined to live in dictionaries forever! And the minor and unimportant 10 citizens and their wives went around acting in much the same way Everybody ran to the bank to see the gold sack, and before noon grieved and envious crowds began to flock in from Brixton and all neighboring towns, and that afternoon and next day reporters began to arrive from everywhere to verify the sack and its history and write the whole thing up anew, and make dashing free hand pictures of the sack, and of Richards's house, and the bank, and the 20 Presbyterian church, and the Baptist church, and the public square, and the town hall where the test would be applied and the money delivered, and damnable portraits of the Richardses, and Pinkerton the banker, and Cox, and the foreman, and Reverend Burgess, and the postmaster—and even of Jack Halliday, who was the loafing, good natured, no account, irreverent fisherman, hunter, boys' friend, stray dogs' friend, typical "Sam Lawson" of the town The little mean, smirking, oily Pinkerton showed the sack to all comers, and rubbed his sleek palms together pleas 30 antly, and enlarged upon the town's fine old reputation for honesty and upon this wonderful endorsement of it, and hoped and believed that the example would now spread far and wide over the American world, and be epoch making in the matter of moral regeneration And so on, and so on

By the end of a week things had quieted down again, the wild intoxication of pride and joy had sobered to a soft, sweet, silent delight—a sort of deep, nameless, unutterable content All faces bore 40 a look of peaceful, holy happiness

Then a change came It was a gradual change so gradual that its beginnings were hardly noticed, maybe were not noticed at all, except by Jack Halliday, who always noticed everything, and always made fun of it, too, no matter what it was He began to throw out chaffing remarks about people not looking quite so happy as they did a day or two ago, and next he claimed that the new aspect was

deepening to positive sadness, next, that it was taking on a sick look, and finally he said that everybody was become so moody, thoughtful, and absent minded that he could rob the meanest man in town of a cent out of the bottom of his breeches pocket and not disturb his reverie

At this stage—or at about this stage—a saying like this was dropped at bedtime—with a sigh, usually—by the head of each of the nineteen principal households

"Ah, what *could* have been the remark that Good son made!"

And straightway—with a shudder—came this, from the man's wife

"Oh, *don't!* What horrible thing are you mulling in your mind? Put it away from you, for God's sake!"

But that question was wrung from those men again the next night—and got the same retort But weaker

And the third night the men uttered the question yet again—with anguish, and absently This time—and the following night—the wives fidgeted feebly, and tried to say something But didn't

And the night after that they found their tongues and responded—longingly,

"Oh, if we *could* only guess!"

Hallidays comments grew daily more and more sparklingly disagreeable and disparaging He went diligently about, laughing at the town, individually and in mass But his laugh was the only one left in the village it fell upon a hollow and mournful vacancy and emptiness Not even a smile was findable anywhere Halliday carried a cigar-box around on a tripod, playing that it was a camera, and halted all passers and aimed the thing and said, "Ready!—now look pleasant, please," but not even this capital joke could surprise the dreary faces into any softening

So three weeks passed—one week was left It was Saturday evening—after supper Instead of the aforetime Saturday evening flutter and bustle and shopping and larking, the streets were empty and desolate Richards and his old wife sat apart in their little parlor—miserable and thinking This was become their evening habit now the life long habit which had preceded it, of reading, knitting, and contented chat, or receiving or paying neighborly calls, was dead and gone and forgotten, ages ago—two or three weeks ago, nobody talked now, nobody read, nobody

visited—the whole village sat at home, sighing, worrying, silent. Trying to guess out that remark.

The postman left a letter. Richards glanced listlessly, at the superscription and the post-mark—unfamiliar, both—and tossed the letter on the table and resumed his might-have-beens and his hopeless dull miseries where he had left them off. Two or three hours later his wife got wearily up and was going away to bed without a good-night—custom now—but she stopped near the letter and eyed it awhile with a dead interest, then broke it open, and began to skim it over. Richards, sitting there with his chair tilted back against the wall and his chin between his knees, heard something fall. It was his wife. He sprang to her side, but she cried out:

"Leave me alone, I am too happy. Read the letter—read it!"

He did. He devoured it, his brain reeling. The letter was from a distant State, and it said:

I am a stranger to you, but no matter. I have something to tell. I have just arrived home from Mexico, and learned about that episode. Of course you do not know who made that remark, but I know, and I am the only person living who does know. It was GOODSON. I knew him well, many years ago. I passed through your village that very night, and was his guest till the midnight train came along. I overheard him make that remark to the stranger in the dark—it was in Hale Alley. He and I talked of it the rest of the way home, and while smoking in his house. He mentioned many of your villagers in the course of his talk—most of them in a very uncomplimentary way, but two or three favorably among these latter yourself. I say "favorably"—nothing stronger. I remember his saying he did not actually LIKE any person in the town—not one, but that you—I THINK he said you—am almost sure—had done him a very great service once, possibly without knowing the full value of it, and he wished he had a fortune, he would leave it to you when he died, and a curse apiece for the rest of the citizens. Now, then, if it was you that did him that service, you are his legitimate heir, and entitled to the sack of gold. I know that I can trust to your honor and honesty for in a citizen of Hadleyburg these virtues are an inheritance, and so I am going to reveal to you the remark, well satisfied that if you are not the right man you will seek and find the right one and see that poor Goodson's debt of gratitude for the service rendered to is paid. This is the remark: "YOU ARE FAR FROM BEING A BAD MAN. GO, AND RETURN."

Howard L. Stephenson.

"Oh, Edward, the money is ours, and I am so grateful, oh, so grateful—kiss me, dear, it's forever since we kissed—and we needed it so—the money—and now you are free of Pinkerton and his bank,

and nobody's slave any more, it seems to me I could fly for joy."

It was a happy half-hour that the couple spent there on the settee carressing each other: it was the old days come again—days that had begun with their courtship and lasted without a break till the stranger brought the deadly money. By-and-by the wife said:

"Oh, Edward, how lucky it was you did him that grand service, poor Goodson! I never liked him, but I love him now. And it was fine and beautiful of you never to mention it or brag about it." Then, with a touch of reproach, "But you ought to have told me, Edward, you ought to have told your wife, you know."

"Well, I—er—well, Mary, you see—"

"Now stop hemming and hawing, and tell me about it, Edward. I always loved you, and now I'm proud of you. Everybody believes there was only one good generous soul in this village, and now it turns out that you—Edward, why don't you tell me?"

"Well—er—er—Why, Mary, I can't!"

"You can't? Why can't you?"

"You see, he—well, he—he made me promise I wouldn't."

The wife looked him over, and said, very slowly, "Made—you—promise? Edward, what do you tell me that for?"

"Mary, do you think I would lie?"

She was troubled and silent for a moment, then she laid her hand within his and said:

"No . . . no. We have wandered far enough from our bearings—God spare us that! In all your life you have never uttered a lie. But now—now that the foundations of things seem to be crumbling from under us, we—we—" She lost her voice for a moment, then said, brokenly, "Lead us not into temptation . . . I think you made the promise, Edward. Let it rest so. Let us keep away from that ground. Now—that is all gone by; let us be happy again; it is no time for clouds."

Edward found it something of an effort to comply, for his mind kept wandering—trying to remember what the service was that he had done Goodson.

The couple lay awake the most of the night, Mary happy and busy, Edward busy, but not so happy. Mary was planning what she would do with the money. Edward was trying to recall that service. At first his conscience was sore on account of the lie he had told Mary—if it was a lie. After much

reflection—suppose it *was* a lie? What then? Was it such a great matter? Aren't we always *acting* lies? Then why not *tell* them? Look at Mary—look what she had done. While he was hurrying off on his honest errand, what was she doing? Lamenting because the papers hadn't been destroyed and the money kept! Is theft better than lying?

That point lost its sting—the lie dropped into the background and left comfort behind it. The next point came to the front *had* he rendered that service? Well here was Goodson's own evidence as reported in Stephenson's letter, there could be no better evidence than that—it was even *proof* that he had rendered it. Of course. So that point was settled. No, not quite. He recalled with a wince that this unknown Mr. Stephenson was just a trifle unsure as to whether the performer of it was Richards or some other—and, oh dear, he had put Richards on his honor! He must himself decide whether that money must go—and Mr. Stephenson was not doubting that if he was the wrong man he would go honorably and find the right one. Oh, it was odious to put a man in such a situation—ah, why couldn't Stephenson have left out that doubt! What did he want to intrude that for?

Further reflection. How did it happen that Richards's name remained in Stephenson's mind as indicating the right man, and not some other man's name? That looked good. Yes, that looked very good. In fact, it went on looking better and better, straight along—until by and-by it grew into positive *proof*. And then Richards put the matter at once out of his mind, for he had a private instinct that a proof once established is better left so.

He was feeling reasonably comfortable now, but there was still one other detail that kept pushing itself on his notice. Of course he had done that service—that was settled, but what *was* that service? He must recall it—he would not go to sleep till he had recalled it, it would make his peace of mind perfect. And so he thought and thought. He thought of a dozen things—possible services, even probable services—but none of them seemed adequate, none of them seemed large enough, none of them seemed worth the money—worth the fortune Goodson had wished he could leave in his will. And besides, he couldn't remember having done them, anyway. Now, then—now, then—what *kind* of a service would it be that would make a man so inordinately grateful?

Ah—the saving of his soul! That must be it. Yes, he could remember, now, how he once set himself the task of converting Goodson, and labored at it as much as—he was going to say three months, but upon closer examination it shrunk to a month, then to a week, then to a day, then to nothing. Yes, he remembered now, and with unwelcome vividness, that Goodson had told him to go to thunder and mind his own business—he wasn't hankering to follow Hadleyburg to heaven!

So that solution was a failure—he hadn't saved Goodson's soul. Richards was discouraged. Then after a little came another idea: had he saved Goodson's property? No, that wouldn't do—he hadn't any. His life? That is it! Of course. Why, he might have thought of it before. This time he was on the right track, sure. His imagination mill was hard at work in a minute, now.

Thereafter during a stretch of two exhausting hours he was busy saving Goodson's life. He saved it in all kinds of difficult and perilous ways. In every case he got it saved satisfactorily up to a certain point, then, just as he was beginning to get well persuaded that it had really happened, a troublesome detail would turn up which made the whole thing impossible. As in the matter of drowning for instance. In that case he had swum out and tugged Goodson ashore in an unconscious state with a great crowd looking on and applauding, but when he had got it all thought out and was just beginning to remember all about it a whole swarm of disqualifying details arrived on the ground. The town would have known of the circumstance, Mary would have known of it, it would glare like a limelight in his own memory instead of being an inconspicuous service which he had possibly rendered “without knowing its full value.” And at this point he remembered that he couldn't swim, anyway.

Ah—*there* was a point which he had been overlooking from the start. It had to be a service which he had rendered “possibly without knowing the full value of it.” Why, really, that ought to be an easy hunt—much easier than those others. And sure enough, by-and-by he found it. Goodson, years and years ago, came near marrying a very sweet and pretty girl, named Nancy Hewitt, but in some way or other the match had been broken off, the girl died, Goodson remained a bachelor, and by-and-by became a soured one and a frank despiser of the

human species. Soon after the girl's death the village found out, or thought it had found out, that she carried a spoonful of negro blood in her veins. Richards worked at these details a good while, and in the end he thought he remembered things concerning them which must have gotten mislaid in his memory through long neglect. He seemed to dimly remember that it was *he* that found out about the negro blood, that it was *he* that told the village, that the village told Goodson where they got it, that he thus saved Goodson from marrying the tainted girl, that he had done him this great service "without knowing the full value of it," in fact without knowing that he *was* doing it, but that Goodson knew the value of it, and what a narrow escape he had had, and so went to his grave grateful to his benefactor and wishing he had a fortune to leave him. It was all clear and simple now, and the more he went over it the more luminous and certain it grew, and at last, when he nestled to sleep satisfied and happy, he remembered the whole thing just as if it had been yesterday. In fact, he dimly remembered Goodson's *telling* him his gratitude once. Meantime Mary had spent six thousand dollars on a new house for herself and a pair of slippers for her pastor, and then had fallen peacefully to rest.

That same Saturday evening the postman had delivered a letter to each of the other principal citizens—nineteen letters in all. No two of the envelopes were alike, and no two of the superscriptions were alike, and no two of the superscriptions were ³⁰ in the same hand, but the letters inside were just like each other in every detail but one. They were exact copies of the letter received by Richards—hand-writing and all—and were all signed by Stephenson, but in place of Richards's name each receiver's own name appeared.

All night long eighteen principal citizens did what their caste-brother Richards was doing at the same time—they put in their energies trying to remember what notable service it was that they had unconsciously done Barclay Goodson. In no case was it a holiday job; still they succeeded.

And while they were at this work, which was difficult, their wives put in the night spending the money, which was easy. During that one night the nineteen wives spent an average of seven thousand dollars each out of the forty thousand in the sack—a hundred and thirty-three thousand altogether.

Next day there was a surprise for Jack Halliday.

He noticed that the faces of the nineteen chief citizens and their wives bore that expression of peaceful and holy happiness again. He could not understand it: neither was he able to invent any remarks about it that could damage it or disturb it. And so it was his turn to be dissatisfied with life. His private guesses at the reasons for the happiness failed in all instances, upon examination. When he met Mrs. Wilcox and noticed the placid ecstasy in her face, he said to himself, "Her cat has had kittens"—and went and asked the cook, it was not so, the cook had detected the happiness, but did not know the cause. When Halliday found the duplicate ecstasy in the face of "Shadbelly" Billson (village nickname), he was sure some neighbor of Billson's had broken his leg, but inquiry showed that this had not happened. The subdued ecstasy in Gregory Yates's face could mean but one thing—he was a mother-in-law short, it was another mistake. "And Pinkerton—Pinkerton—he has collected ten cents that he thought he was going to lose." And so on, and so on. In some cases the guesses had to remain in doubt, in the others they proved distinct errors. In the end Halliday said to himself, "Anyway it foots up that there's nineteen Hadleyburg families temporarily in heaven. I don't know how it happened, I only know Providence is off duty to-day."

An architect and builder from the next State had lately ventured to set up a small business in this unpromising village, and his sign had now been hanging out a week. Not a customer yet, he was a discouraged man, and sorry he had come. But his weather changed suddenly now. First one and then another chief citizen's wife said to him privately:

"Come to my house Monday week—but say nothing about it for the present. We think of building."

He got eleven invitations that day. That night he wrote his daughter and broke off her match with her student. He said she could marry a mile higher than that.

Pinkerton the banker and two or three other well-to-do men planned country-seats—but waited. That kind don't count their chickens until they are hatched.

The Wilsons devised a grand new thing—a fancy-dress ball. They made no actual promises, but told all their acquaintanceship in confidence that they were thinking the matter over and thought they should give it—"and if we do, you will be invited,

of course. People were surprised and said one to another, "Why they are crazy those poor Wilsons they can't afford it." Several among the nineteen said privately to their husbands, "It is a good idea, we will keep still till their cheap thing is over, then we will give one that will make it sick."

The days drifted along, and the bill of future squanderings rose higher and higher wilder and wilder more and more foolish and reckless. It began to look as if every member of the nineteen would not only spend his whole forty thousand dollars before receiving day, but be actually in debt by the time he got the money. In some cases light-headed people did not stop with planning to spend, they really spent—on credit. They bought land, mortgages, farms, speculative stocks, fine clothes, horses, and various other things, paid down the bonus and made themselves liable for the rest—at ten days. Presently the sober second thought came, and Halliday noticed that a ghastly anxiety was beginning to show up in a good many faces. Again he was puzzled and didn't know what to make of it. "The Wilcox kittens aren't dead, for they weren't born, nobody's broken a leg, there's no shrinkage in mother-in-laws, *nothing* has happened—it is an insolvable mystery."

There was another puzzled man, too—the Rev. Mr. Burgess. For days wherever he went people seemed to follow him or to be watching out for him and if he ever found himself in a retired spot a member of the nineteen would be sure to appear thrust an envelope privately into his hand whisper "To be opened at the town hall Friday evening," then vanish away like a guilty thing. He was expecting that there might be one claimant for the sack—doubtful, however, Goodson being dead—but it never occurred to him that all this crowd might be claimants. When the great Friday came at last, he found that he had nineteen envelopes.

III

The town hall had never looked finer. The platform at the end of it was backed by a showy draping of flags. At intervals along the walls were festoons of flags, the gallery fronts were clothed in flags, the supporting columns were swathed in flags. All this was to impress the stranger, for he would be there in considerable force, and in a large degree he would be connected with the press. The house was full. The 412 fixed seats were occupied, also the 68 extra

chairs which had been packed into the aisles. The steps of the platform were occupied, some distinguished strangers were given seats on the platform, at the horseshoe of tables which fenced the front and sides of the platform sat a strong force of special correspondents who had come from everywhere. It was the best dressed house the town had ever produced. There were some tolerably expensive toilets there, and in several cases the ladies who wore them had the look of being unfamiliar with that kind of clothes. At least the town thought they had that look, but the notion could have arisen from the town's knowledge of the fact that these ladies had never inhabited such clothes before.

The gold sack stood on a little table at the front of the platform where all the house could see it. The bulk of the house gazed at it with a burning interest, a mouth-watering interest, a wistful and pathetic interest. A minority of nineteen couples gazed at it tenderly, lovingly, proprietarily, and the male half of this minority kept saying over to themselves the moving little impromptu speeches of thankfulness for the audience's applause and congratulations which they were presently going to get up and deliver. Every now and then one of these got a piece of paper out of his vest pocket and privately glanced at it to refresh his memory.

Of course there was a buzz of conversation going on—there always is, but at last when the Rev. Mr. Burgess rose and laid his hand on the sack he could hear his microbes gnaw. The place was so still. He related the curious history of the sack, then went on to speak in warm terms of Hadleyburg's old and well-earned reputation for spotless honesty, and of the town's just pride in this reputation. He said that this reputation was a treasure of priceless value, that under Providence its value had now become immensely enhanced, for the recent episode had spread this fame far and wide, and thus had focussed the eyes of the American world upon this village, and made its name for all time, as he hoped and believed, a synonym for commercial incorruptibility. (*Applause*) "And who is to be the guardian of this noble treasure—the community as a whole? No! The responsibility is individual, not communal. From this forth each and every one of you is in his own person its special guardian and individually responsible that no harm shall come to it. Do you—does each of you—except this great trust? [*Unmultuous*

assent] Then all is well Transmit it to your children and to your children's children To-day your purity is beyond reproach—see to it that it shall remain so To-day there is not a person in your community who could be beguiled to touch a penny not his own—see to it that you abide in this grace [“We will we will!”] This is not the place to make comparisons between ourselves and other communities—some of them ungracious toward us, they have their ways, we have ours, let us be content [Applause] 10 I am done Under my hand, my friends, rests a stranger's eloquent recognition of what we are through him the world will always henceforth know what we are We do not know who he is, but in your name I utter your gratitude, and ask you to raise your voices in indorsement”

The house rose in a body and made the walls quake with the thunders of its thankfulness for the space of a long minute Then it sat down, and Mr Burgess took an envelope out of his pocket The 20 house held its breath while he slit the envelope open and took from it a slip of paper He read its contents—slowly and impressively—the audience listening with tranced attention to this magic document, each of whose words stood for an ingot of gold.

“*The remark which I made to the distressed stranger was this “You are very far from being a bad man, go, and reform.”*” Then he continued “We shall know in a moment now whether the re- 30 mark here quoted corresponds with the one concealed in the sack, and if that shall prove to be so—and it undoubtedly will—this sack of gold belongs to a fellow-citizen who will henceforth stand before the nation as the symbol of the special virtue which has made our town famous throughout the land—Mr. Billson!”

The house had gotten itself all ready to burst into the proper tornado of applause; but instead of doing it, it seemed stricken with a paralysis, there was a deep hush for a moment or two, then a wave 40 of whispered murmurs swept the place—of about this tenor “*Billson! oh, come, this is too thin! Twenty dollars to a stranger—or anybody—Billson! Tell it to the marines!*” And now at this point the house caught its breath all of a sudden, in a new access of astonishment, for it discovered that whereas in one part of the hall Deacon Billson was standing up with his head meekly bowed, in another part of it Lawyer Wilson was doing the same There

was a wondering silence now for a while Everybody was puzzled and nineteen couples were surprised and indignant

Billson and Wilson turned and stared at each other Billson asked, bitingly,

“Why do you rise, Mr. Wilson?”

“Because I have a right to Perhaps you will be good enough to explain to the house why you rise?”

“With great pleasure Because I wrote that paper”

“It is an impudent falsity! I wrote it myself”

It was Burgess's turn to be paralyzed He stood looking vacantly at first one of the men and then the other, and did not seem to know what to do The house was stupefied Lawyer Wilson spoke up, now, and said,

“I ask the Chair to read the name signed to that paper”

That brought the Chair to itself, and it read out the name,

“John Wharton *Billson*”

“There!” shouted Billson, “what have you got to say for yourself, now? And what kind of apology are you going to make to me and to this insulted house for the imposture which you have attempted to play here?”

“No apologies are due, sir, and as for the rest of it, I publicly charge you with pilfering my note from Mr Burgess and substituting a copy of it signed with your own name There is no other way by which you could have gotten hold of the test-remark, I alone, of living men, possessed the secret of its wording”

There was likely to be a scandalous state of things if this went on; everybody noticed with distress that the short-hand scribes were scribbling like mad; many people were crying “Chair, Chair! Order! order!” Burgess rapped with his gavel, and said:

“Let us not forget the proprieties due There has evidently been a mistake somewhere, but surely that is all. If Mr. Wilson gave me an envelope—and I remember now that he did—I still have it”

He took one out of his pocket, opened it, glanced at it, looked surprised and worried, and stood silent a few moments. Then he waved his hand in a wandering and mechanical way, and made an effort or two to say something, then gave it up, despondently. Several voices cried out.

“Read it! read it! What is it?”

So he began in a dazed and sleep-walker fashion:

“*The remark which I made to the unhappy*

stranger was this "You are far from being a bad man [The house gazed at him, marvelling] Go and reform" ' [Murmurs 'Amazing! what can this mean?'] 'This one,' said the Chair, "is signed Thurlow G. Wilson"

'There!' cried Wilson, "I reckon that settles it! I know perfectly well my note was purloined"

'Purloined!' retorted Billson "I'll let you know that neither you nor any man of your kidney must venture to—"

The Chair "Order, gentlemen, order! Take your seats, both of you, please"

They obeyed, shaking their heads and grumbling angrily. The house was profoundly puzzled, it did not know what to do with this curious emergency. Presently Thompson got up. Thompson was the latter. He would have liked to be a Nineteener, but such was not for him, his stock of hats was not considerable enough for the position. He said

"Mr. Chairman, if I may be permitted to make a suggestion, can both of these gentlemen be right? I put it to you, sir, can both have happened to say the very same words to the stranger? It seems to me—"

The tanner got up and interrupted him. The tanner was a disgruntled man, he believed himself entitled to be a Nineteener, but he couldn't get recognition. It made him a little unpleasant in his ways and speech. Said he

"Sho, *that's* not the point! *That* could happen—twice in a hundred years—but not the other thing. Neither of them gave the twenty dollars!" (*A ripple of applause*)

Billson "I did!"

Wilson "I did!"

Then each accused the other of pilfering.

The Chair "Order! Sit down, if you please—both of you. Neither of the notes has been out of my possession at any moment."

A Voice "Good—that settles *that*!"

The Tanner "Mr. Chairman, one thing is now plain: one of these men has been eavesdropping under the other one's bed, and filching family secrets. If it is not unparliamentary to suggest it, I will remark that both are equal to it. [*The Chair* "Order! order!"] I withdraw the remark, sir, and will confine myself to suggesting that if one of them has overheard the other reveal the test-remark to his wife, we shall catch him now."

A Voice "How?"

The Tanner "Easily. The two have not quoted the remark in exactly the same words. You would have noticed that if there hadn't been a considerable stretch of time and an exciting quarrel inserted between the two readings."

A Voice "Name the difference."

The Tanner "The word *very* is in Billson's note, and not in the other."

Many Voices "That's so—he's right!"

The Tanner "And so, if the Chair will examine the test remark in the sack, we shall know which of these two frauds—[*The Chair* "Order!"]—which of these two adventurers—[*The Chair* "Order! order!"]—which of these two gentlemen—[*laughter and applause*]*—is entitled to wear the belt as being the first dishonest blatherskite ever bred in this town—which he has dishonored, and which will be a sultry place for him from now out!*" (*Vigorous applause*)

Many Voices "Open it!—open the sack!"

Mr. Burgess made a slit in the sack, slid his hand in and brought out an envelope. In it were a couple of folded notes. He said

"One of these is marked, 'Not to be examined until all written communications which have been addressed to the Chair—if any—shall have been read.' The other is marked '*The Test*.' Allow me. It is worded—to wit

"I do not require that the first half of the remark which was made to me by my benefactor shall be quoted with exactness, for it was not striking and could be forgotten, but its closing fifteen words are quite striking, and I think easily rememberable: unless *these* shall be accurately reproduced, let the applicant be regarded as an impostor. My benefactor began by saying he seldom gave advice to any one but that it always bore the hall mark of high value when he did give it. Then he said this—and it has never faded from my memory: "*You are far from being a bad man—*"' "

Fifty Voices "That settles it—the money's Wilson's! Wilson! Wilson! Speech! Speech!"

People jumped up and crowded around Wilson, wringing his hand and congratulating fervently—meantime the Chair was hammering with the gavel and shouting

"Order, gentlemen! Order! Order! Let me finish reading, please." When quiet was restored, the reading was resumed—as follows

"Go, and reform—or, mark my words—some

day, for your sins, you will die and go to hell or Hadleyburg—TRY AND MAKE IT THE FORMER ” ” ”

A ghastly silence followed. First an angry cloud began to settle darkly upon the faces of the citizenship, after a pause the cloud began to rise, and a tickled expression tried to take its place, tried so hard that it was only kept under with great and painful difficulty, the reporters, the Braxtonites, and other strangers bent their heads down and shielded their faces with their hands, and managed to hold in by 10 main strength and heroic courtesy. At this most inopportune time burst upon the stillness the roar of a solitary voice—Jack Halliday’s

“That’s got the hall-mark on it!”

Then the house let go, strangers and all. Even Mr. Burgess’s gravity broke down presently, then the audience considered itself officially absolved from all restraint, and it made the most of its privilege. It was a good long laugh, and a tempestuously whole- 20 hearted one, but it ceased at last—long enough for Mr. Burgess to try to resume, and for the people to get their eyes partially wiped, then it broke out again, and afterward yet again, then at last Burgess was able to get out these serious words

“It is useless to try to disguise the fact—we find ourselves in the presence of a matter of grave import. It involves the honor of your town, it strikes at the town’s good name. The difference of a single word between the test-remarks offered by Mr. Wilson and Mr. Billson was itself a serious thing, since it indi- 30 cated that one or the other of these gentlemen had committed a theft—”

The two men were sitting limp, nerveless, crushed, but at these words both were electrified into movement, and started to get up—

“Sit down!” said the Chair, sharply, and they obeyed. “That, as I have said, was a serious thing. And it was—but for only one of them. But the matter has become graver; for the honor of *both* is now in formidable peril. Shall I go even further, and say 40 in inextinguishable peril? *Both* left out the crucial fifteen words.” He paused. During several moments he allowed the stillness to gather and deepen its impressive effects, then added: “There would seem to be but one way whereby this could happen. I ask these gentlemen—Was there *collusion?*—*agreement?*”

A low murmur sifted through the house; its import was, “He’s got them both.”

Billson was not used to emergencies: he sat in a helpless collapse. But Wilson was a lawyer. He struggled to his feet, pale and worried, and said

“I ask the indulgence of the house while I explain this most painful matter. I am sorry to say what I am about to say, since it must inflict irreparable injury upon Mr. Billson, whom I have always esteemed and respected until now, and in whose invulnerability to temptation I entirely believed—as did you all. But for the preservation of my own honor I must speak—and with frankness. I confess with shame—and I now beseech your pardon for it—that I said to the ruined stranger all of the words contained in the test-remark, including the disparaging fifteen [*Sensation*] When the late publication was made I recalled them, and I resolved to claim the sack of coin, for by every right I was entitled to it. Now I will ask you to consider this point, and weigh it well: that stranger’s gratitude to me that night knew no bounds, he said himself that he could find no words for it that were adequate, and that if he should ever be able he would repay me a thousandfold. Now, then, I ask you this: could I expect—could I believe—could I even remotely imagine—that, feeling as he did, he would do so ungrateful a thing as to add those quite unnecessary fifteen words to his test?—set a trap for me?—expose me as a slanderer of my own town before my own people assembled in a public hall? It was preposterous, it was impossible. His test would contain only the kindly opening clause of my remark. Of that I had no shadow of doubt. You would have thought as I did. You would not have expected a base betrayal from one whom you had befriended and against whom you had committed no offence. And so, with perfect confidence, perfect trust, I wrote on a piece of paper the opening words—ending with ‘Go, and reform,’—and signed it. When I was about to put it in an envelope I was called into my back office, and without thinking I left the paper lying open on my desk.” He stopped, turned his head slowly toward Billson, waited a moment, then added. “I ask you to note this: when I returned, a little later, Mr. Billson was retiring by my street door.” (*Sensation*.)

In a moment Billson was on his feet shouting:

“It’s a lie! It’s an infamous lie!”

The Chair. “Be seated, sir! Mr. Wilson has the floor.”

Billson's friends pulled him into his seat and quieted him, and Wilson went on

"Those are the simple facts My note was now lying in a different place on the table from where I had left it I noticed that, but attached no importance to it, thinking a draught had blown it there That Mr Billson would read a private paper was a thing which could not occur to me, he was an honorable man, and he would be above that If you will allow me to say it, I think his extra word 'very' stands explained, it is attributable to a defect of memory I was the only man in the world who could furnish here any detail of the test-mark—by *honorable* means I have finished"

There is nothing in the world like a persuasive speech to fuddle the mental apparatus and upset the convictions and debase the emotions of an audience not practised in the tricks and delusions of oratory Wilson sat down victorious The hour submerged him in tides of approving applause, friends swarmed to him and shook him by the hand and congratulated him, and Billson was shouted down and not allowed to say a word The Chair hammered and hammered with its gavel, and kept shouting,

"But let us proceed, gentlemen, let us proceed!"

At last there was a measurable degree of quiet, and the latter said,

"But what is there to proceed with, sir, but to deliver the money?"

Voices "That's it! That's it! Come forward, 30 Wilson!"

The Hatter "I move three cheers for Mr Wilson, Symbol of the special virtue which—"

The cheers burst forth before he could finish, and in the midst of them—and in the midst of the clamor of the gavel also—some enthusiasts mounted Wilson on a big friend's shoulder and were going to fetch him in triumph to the platform The Chair's voice now rose above the noise—

"Order! To your places! You forget that there is 40 still a document to be read" When quiet had been restored he took up the document, and was going to read it, but laid it down again, saying, "I forgot, this is not to be read until all written communications received by me have first been read" He took an envelope out of his pocket, removed its enclosure, glanced at it—seemed astonished—held it out and gazed at it—stared at it

Twenty or thirty voices cried out

'What is it? Read it! read it!'

And he did—slowly, and wondering

The remark which I made to the stranger—
[*Voices* "Hello! how's this?"]—was this "You are far from being a bad man [*Voices* "Great Scott!"] Go, and reform" [*Voice* "Oh, saw my leg off!"] Signed by Mr Pinkerton the banker

The pandemonium of delight which turned itself loose now was of a sort to make the judicious weep Those whose withers were unwrung laughed till the tears ran down, the reporters, in throes of laughter, set down disordered pot hooks which would never in the world be decipherable, and a sleeping dog jumped up, scared out of its wits, and barked itself crazy at the turmoil All manner of cries were scattered through the din "We're getting rich—two Symbols of Incorruptibility!—without counting Billson" "Three!—count Shadbelly in—we can't have too many!" "All right—Billson's elected!" "Alas, poor Wilson—victim of two thieves!"

A *Powerful Voice* "Silence! The Chair's fished up something more out of its pocket"

Voices "Hurrah! Is it something fresh? Read it! read! read!"

The Chair (reading) "The remark which I made, etc 'You are far from being a bad man Go,' etc Signed, 'Gregory Yates'"

Tornado of Voices "Four Symbols!" "'Rah for Yates!" "Fish again!"

The house was in a roaring humor now, and ready to get all the fun out of the occasion that might be in it Several Nineteeners, looking pale and distressed, got up and began to work their way toward the aisles, but a score of shouts went up

'The doors, the doors—close the doors, no Incorruptible shall leave this place! Sit down, everybody!"

The mandate was obeyed

"Fish again! Read! read!"

The Chair fished again, and once more the familiar words began to fall from its lips—"You are far from being a bad man—"

"Name! name! What's his name?"

"I Ingoldsby Sergeant"

"Five elected! Pick up the Symbols! Go on, go on!"

"You are far from being a bad—"

"Name! name!"

"Nicholas Whitworth"

"Hooray! hooray! it's a symbolical day!"

Somebody wailed in, and began to sing this rhyme

(leaving out "it's") to the lovely "Mikado" tunc of "When a man's afraid of a beautiful maid", the audience joined in, with joy, then, just in time, somebody contributed another line—

And don't you this forget—

The house roared it out A third line was at once furnished—

Corruptibles far from Hadleyburg are—

The house roared that one too As the last note died, Jack Halliday's voice rose high and clear, freighted with a final line—

But the Symbols are here, you bet!

That was sung, with booming enthusiasm Then the happy house started in at the beginning and sang the four lines through twice, with immense swing and dash, and finished up with a crashing three-times-three and a tiger for "Hadleyburg the Incorruptible" and all Symbols of it which we shall find worthy to receive the hall-mark to-night "

Then the shoutings at the Chair began again, all over the place

"Go on! go on! Read! read some more! Read all you've got!"

"That's it—go on! We are winning eternal celebrity!"

A dozen men got up now and began to protest They said that this farce was the work of some abandoned joker, and was an insult to the whole community. Without a doubt these signatures were all forgeries—

"Sit down! sit down! Shut up! You are confessing We'll find *your* names in the lot."

"Mr. Chairman, how many of those envelopes have you got?"

The Chair counted.

"Together with those that have been already examined, there are nineteen."

A storm of dense applause broke out.

"Perhaps they all contain the secret I move that you open them all and read every signature that is attached to a note of that sort—and read also the first eight words of the note."

"Second the motion!"

It was put and carried—uproariously Then poor old Richards got up, and his wife rose and stood at his side. Her head was bent down, so that none might

see that she was crying Her husband gave her his arm, and so supporting her, he began to speak in a quivering voice

"My friends, you have known us two—Mary and me—all our lives, and I think you have liked us and respected us—"

The Chair interrupted him.

"Allow me It is quite true—that which you are saying, Mr Richards, this town *does* know you two, 10 it *does* like you, it *does* respect you, more—it honors you and *loves* you—"

Halliday's voice rang out

"That's the hall-marked truth, too! If the Chair is right, let the house speak up and say it Rise! Now, then—hip! hip! hip!—all together!"

The house rose in mass, faced toward the old couple eagerly, filled the air with a snow-storm of waving handkerchiefs, and delivered the cheers with all its affectionate heart

The Chair then continued

"What I was going to say is this We know your good heart, Mr. Richards, but this is not a time for the exercise of charity toward offenders [Shouts of "Right! right!"] I see your generous purpose in your face, but I cannot allow you to plead for these men—"

"But I was going to—"

"Please take your seat, Mr. Richards We must examine the rest of these notes—simple fairness to the men who have already been exposed requires this As soon as that has been done—I give you my word for this—you shall be heard "

Many Voices "Right!—the Chair is right—no interruption can be permitted at this stage! Go on!—the names! the names!—according to the terms of the motion!"

The old couple sat reluctantly down, and the husband whispered to the wife, "It is pitifully hard to have to wait, the shame will be greater than ever 40 when they find we were only going to plead for *ourselves*."

Straightway the jollity broke loose again with the reading of the names

"'You are far from being a bad man—' Signature, 'Robert J. Titmarsh.'

"'You are far from being a bad man—' Signature, 'Elphalet Weeks.'

"'You are far from being a bad man—' Signature, 'Oscar B. Wilder.' "

At this point the house lit upon the idea of taking the eight words out of the Chairman's hands. He was not unthankful for that. Thenceforward he held up each note in its turn, and waited. The house droned out the eight words in a massed and measured and musical deep volume of sound (with a daringly close resemblance to a well known church chant)—“‘You are far from being a b-a-a-d man’” Then the Chair said, “Signature, ‘Archibald Wilcox’” And so on, and so on, name after name, and everybody had 10 an increasingly and gloriously good time except the wretched Nineteen. Now and then, when a particularly shining name was called, the house made the Chair wait while it chanted the whole of the test remark from the beginning to the closing words, “‘And go to hell or Hadleyburg—try and make it the for-or-me-r!’” and in these special cases they added a grand and agonized and imposing “‘A-a-a men!’”

The list dwindled, dwindled, dwindled, poor old Richards keeping tally of the count, wincing when a 20 name resembling his own was pronounced, and waiting in miserable suspense for the time to come when it would be his humiliating privilege to rise with Mary and finish his plea, which he was intending to word thus “—for until now we have never done any wrong thing, but have gone our humble way unreproached. We are very poor, we are old, and have no chick nor child to help us, we were sorely tempted, and we fell. It was my purpose when I got up before to make confession and beg that my name might not 30 be read out in this public place, for it seemed to us that we could not bear it, but I was prevented. It was just, it was our place to suffer with the rest. It has been hard for us. It is the first time we have ever heard our name fall from any one's lips—sullied. Be merciful—for the sake of the better days, make our shame as light to bear as in your charity you can.” At this point in his reverie Mary nudged him, perceiving that his mind was absent. The house was chanting, “‘You are f-a-r,’ etc.”

“Be ready,” Mary whispered. “Your name comes now, he has read eighteen.”

The chant ended.

“Next! next! next!” came volleying from all over the house.

Burgess put his hand into his pocket. The old couple, trembling, began to rise. Burgess fumbled a moment, then said,

“I find I have read them all.”

Faint with joy and surprise, the couple sank into their seats, and Mary whispered,

‘Oh, bless God, we are saved!—he has lost ours—I wouldn't give this for a hundred of those sacks!’”

The house burst out with its “Mikado” travesty, and sang it three times with ever-increasing enthusiasm, rising to its feet when it reached for the third time the closing line—

But the Symbols are here, you bet!

and finishing up with cheers and a tiger for “Hadleyburg puny and our eighteen immortal representatives of it.”

Then Wingate, the saddler, got up and proposed cheers “for the cleanest man in town, the one solitary important citizen in it who didn't try to steal that money—Edward Richards.”

They were given with great and moving heartiness, then somebody proposed that Richards “be elected sole Guardian and Symbol of the now Sacred Hadleyburg Tradition with power and right to stand up and look the whole sarcastic world in the face.”

Passed, by acclamation then they sang the “Mikado” again, and ended it with,

And there's one Symbol left, you bet!

There was a pause, then—

A Voice “Now, then, who's to get the sack?”

The Tanner (with bitter sarcasm) “That's easy. The money has to be divided among the eighteen Incorruptibles. They gave the suffering stranger twenty dollars apiece—and that remark—each in his turn—it took twenty-two minutes for the procession to move past. Staked the stranger—total contribution, \$360. All they want is just the loan back—and interest—forty thousand dollars altogether.”

Many Voices (derisively) “That's it! Divvy! divvy! Be kind to the poor—don't keep them waiting!”

The Chair “Order! I now offer the stranger's re- 40 maining document. It says ‘If no claimant shall appear [grand chorus of groans], I desire that you open the sack and count out the money to the principal citizens of your town, they to take it in trust [Cries of “Oh! Oh! Oh!”], and use it in such ways as to them shall seem best for the propagation and preservation of your community's noble reputation for incorruptible honesty [more cries]—a reputation to which their names and their efforts will add a new and far-reaching lustre’ [Enthusiastic outburst of sar-

castic applause] That seems to be all. No—here is a postscript

“P S—CITIZENS OF HADLEYBURG There is no test-remark—nobody made one [*Great sensation*] There wasn't any pauper stranger, nor any twenty-dollar contribution, nor any accompanying benediction and compliment—these are all inventions [*General buzz and hum of astonishment and delight*] Allow me to tell my story—it will take but a word or two I passed through your town at a certain time, 10 and received a deep offence which I had not earned. Any other man would have been content to kill one or two of you and call it square, but to me that would have been a trivial revenge, and inadequate, for the dead do not *suffer* Besides, I could not kill you all—and, anyway, made as I am, even that would not have satisfied me I wanted to damage every man in the place, and every woman—and not in their bodies or in their estate, but in their vanity—the place where feeble and foolish people are most vulnerable So I 20 disguised myself and came back and studied you You were easy game You had an old and lofty reputation for honesty, and naturally you were proud of it—it was your treasure of treasures, the very apple of your eye As soon as I found out that you carefully and vigilantly kept yourselves and your children *out of temptation*, I knew how to proceed Why, you simple creatures, the weakest of all weak things is a virtue which has not been tested in the fire I laid a plan, and gathered a list of names My project was to cor- 30 rupt Hadleyburg the Incorruptible. My idea was to make liars and thieves of nearly half a hundred smirchless men and women who had never in their lives uttered a lie or stolen a penny I was afraid of Goodson He was neither born nor reared in Hadleyburg I was afraid that if I started to operate my scheme by getting my letter laid before you, you would say to yourselves, “Goodson is the only man among us who would give away twenty dollars to a poor devil”—and then you might not bite at my bait. 40 But Heaven took Goodson, then I knew I was safe, and I set my trap and baited it. It may be that I shall not catch all the men to whom I mailed the pretended test secret, but I shall catch the most of them, if I know Hadleyburg nature. [*Voices. “Right—he got every last one of them.”*] I believe they will even steal ostensible *gamble-money*, rather than miss, poor, tempted, and mistrained fellows. I am hoping to eternally and everlastingly squelch your vanity and

give Hadleyburg a new renown—one that will *stick*—and spread far If I have succeeded, open the sack and summon the Committee on Propagation and Preservation of the Hadleyburg Reputation’ ”

A *Cyclone of Voices* “Open it! Open it! The Eighteen to the front! Committee on Propagation of the Tradition! Forward—the Incorruptibles!”

The chair ripped the sack wide, and gathered up a handful of bright, broad yellow coins, shook them together, then examined them—

“Friends, they are only gilded disks of lead!”

There was a crashing outbreak of delight over this news, and when the noise had subsided, the tanner called out

“By right of apparent seniority in this business, Mr Wilson is Chairman of the Committee on Propagation of the Tradition I suggest that he step forward on behalf of his pals, and receive in trust the money.”

A *Hundred Voices* “Wilson! Wilson! Wilson! Speech! Speech!”

Wilson (*in a voice trembling with anger*). “You will allow me to say, and without apologies for my language, *damn* the money!”

A *Voice*. “Oh, and hum a Baptist!”

A *Voice* “Seventeen Symbols left! Step up, gentlemen, and assume your trust!”

There was a pause—no response.

The *Saddler*. “Mr. Chairman, we've got *one* clean man left, anyway, out of the late aristocracy, and he needs money, and deserves it. I move that you appoint Jack Halliday to get up there and auction off that sack of gilt twenty-dollar pieces, and give the result to the right man—the man whom Hadleyburg delights to honor—Edward Richards.”

This was received with great enthusiasm, the dog taking a hand again, the saddler started the bids at a dollar, the Brixton folk and Barnum's representative fought hard for it, the people cheered every jump that the bids made, the excitement climbed moment by moment higher and higher, the bidders got on their mettle and grew steadily more and more daring, more and more determined, the jumps went from a dollar up to five, then to ten, then to twenty, then fifty, then to a hundred, then—

At the beginning of the auction Richards whispered in distress to his wife: “Oh, Mary, can we allow it? It—it—you see, it is an honor-reward, a testimonial to purity of character, and—and—can we

allow it? Hadn't I better get up and— Oh, Mary, what ought we to do?—what do you think we—" (*Halliday's voice* "Fifteen I'm bid!—fifteen for the sack!—twenty!—ah, thanks!—thirty—thanks again! Thirty, thirty, thirty!—do I hear forty?—forty it is! Keep the ball rolling, gentlemen, keep it rolling!—fifty!—thanks, noble Roman!—going at fifty, fifty, fifty!—seventy!—ninety!—splendid!—a hundred!—pile it up, pile it up!—hundred and twenty—forty!—just in time!—hundred and fifty!—two hundred!—10 superb! Do I hear two h—thanks!—two hundred and fifty!")

"It is another temptation Edward—I'm all in a tremble—but oh, we've escaped one temptation, and that ought to warn us, to— ["Six did I hear?—thanks!—six fifty, six f—SEVEN hundred"] And yet, Edward when you think—nobody susp—["Eight hundred dollars!—hurrah!—make it nine!—Mr Parsons, did I hear you say—thanks!—nine!—this noble sack of virgin lead going at only nine hundred dollars, 20 gilding and all—come! do I hear—a thousand!—gratefully yours!—did some one say eleven?—a sack which is going to be the most celebrated in the whole Uni—"] Oh, Edward" (beginning to sob), "we are so poor!—but—but—do as you think best—do as you think best"

Edward fell—that is, he sat still, sat with a conscience which was not satisfied, but which was overpowered by circumstances

Meantime a stranger, who looked like an amateur 30 detective gotten up as an impossible English earl, had been watching the evening's proceedings with manifest interest, and with a contented expression in his face, and he had been privately commenting to himself He was now soliloquizing somewhat like this "None of the Eighteen are bidding, that is not satisfactory, I must change that—the dramatic unities require it, they must buy the sack they tried to steal, they must pay a heavy price, too—some of them are rich And another thing, when I make a mistake in 40 Hadleyburg nature the man that puts that error upon me is entitled to a high honorarium, and some one must pay it This poor old Richards has brought my judgment to shame, he is an honest man—I don't understand it, but I acknowledge it Yes, he saw my deuces and with a straight flush, and by rights the pot is his And it shall be a jack-pot, too, if I can manage it He disappointed me, but let that pass"

He was watching the bidding At a thousand, the

market broke, the prices tumbled swiftly He waited—and still watched One competitor dropped out then another, and another He put in a bid or two, now When the bids had sunk to ten dollars, he added a five, some one raised him a three, he waited a moment, then flung in a fifty dollar jump, and the sack was his—at \$1282 The house broke out in cheers—then stopped, for he was on his feet, and had lifted his hand He began to speak

"I desire to say a word, and ask a favor I am a speculator in rarities, and I have dealings with persons interested in numismatics all over the world I can make a profit on this purchase, just as it stands, but there is a way, if I can get your approval, whereby I can make every one of these leaden twenty dollar pieces worth its face in gold, and perhaps more Grant me that approval, and I will give part of my gains to your Mr Richards, whose invulnerable probity you have so justly and so cordially recognized to night, his share shall be ten thousand dollars, and I will hand him the money to morrow [*Great applause from the house* But the "invulnerable probity" made the Richardses blush prettily, however, it went for modesty, and did no harm] If you will pass my proposition by a good majority—I would like a two thirds vote—I will regard that as the town's consent, and that is all I ask Rarities are always helped by any device which will rouse curiosity and compel remark Now if I may have your permission to stamp upon the faces of each of these ostensible coins the names of the eighteen gentlemen who—"

Nine-tenths of the audience were on their feet in a moment—dog and all—and the proposition was carried with a whirlwind of approving applause and laughter

They sat down, and all the Symbols except "Dr" Clay Harkness got up, violently protesting against the proposed outrage, and threatening to—

"I beg you not to threaten me," said the stranger calmly "I know my legal rights, and am not accustomed to being frightened at bluster" (*Applause*) He sat down "Dr" Harkness saw an opportunity here He was one of the two rich men of the place, and Pinkerton was the other Harkness was proprietor of a mint, that is to say, a popular patent medicine He was running for the Legislature on one ticket, and Pinkerton on the other It was a close race and a hot one, and getting hotter every day Both had strong appetites for money, each had bought a great

tract of land, with a purpose, there was going to be a new railway, and each wanted to be in the Legislature and help locate the route to his own advantage, a single vote might make the decision, and with it two or three fortunes. The stake was large, and Harkness was a daring speculator. He was sitting close to the stranger. He leaned over while one or another of the other Symbols was entertaining the house with protests and appeals, and asked, in a whisper,

"What is your price for the sack?"

"Forty thousand dollars."

"I'll give you twenty."

"No."

"Twenty-five."

"No."

"Say thirty."

"The price is forty thousand dollars, not a penny less."

"All right, I'll give it. I will come to the hotel at ten in the morning. I don't want it known, will see you privately."

"Very good." Then the stranger got up and said to the house

"I find it late. The speeches of these gentlemen are not without merit, not without interest, not without grace, yet if I may be excused I will take my leave. I thank you for the great favor which you have shown me in granting my petition. I ask the Chair to keep the sack for me until to-morrow, and to hand these three five-hundred-dollar notes to Mr. Richards." 30 They were passed up to the Chair. "At nine I will call for the sack, and at eleven will deliver the rest of the ten thousand to Mr. Richards in person, at his home. Good-night."

Then he slipped out, and left the audience making a vast noise, which was composed of a mixture of cheers, the "Mikado" song, dog-disapproval, and the chant. "You are f-a-r from being a b-a-a-d man— a-a-a-men!"

IV

At home the Richardses had to endure congratulations and compliments until midnight. Then they were left to themselves. They looked a little sad, and they sat silent and thinking. Finally Mary sighed and said,

"Do you think we are to blame, Edward—*much* to blame?" and her eyes wandered to the accusing triplet of big bank-notes lying on the table, where the

congratulators had been gloating over them and reverently fingering them. Edward did not answer at once, then he brought out a sigh, and said hesitatingly

"We—we couldn't help it, Mary. It—well, it was ordered. All things are."

Mary glanced up and looked at him steadily, but he didn't return the look. Presently she said:

"I thought congratulations and praises always 10 tasted good. But—it seems to me, now—Edward?"

"Well?"

"Are you going to stay in the bank?"

"N-no."

"Resign?"

"In the morning—by note."

"It does seem best."

Richards bowed his head in his hands and muttered

"Before, I was not afraid to let oceans of people's money pour through my hands, but—Mary, I am so tired, so tired—"

"We will go to bed."

At nine in the morning the stranger called for the sack and took it to the hotel in a cab. At ten Harkness had a talk with him privately. The stranger asked for and got five checks on a metropolitan bank—drawn to "Bearer,"—four for \$1,500 each, and one for \$34,000. He put one of the former in his pocket-book, and the remainder, representing \$38,500, he 30 put in an envelope, and with these he added a note, which he wrote after Harkness was gone. At eleven he called at the Richards house and knocked. Mrs. Richards peeped through the shutters, then went and received the envelope, and the stranger disappeared without a word. She came back flushed and a little unsteady on her legs, and gasped out.

"I am sure I recognized him! Last night it seemed to me that maybe I had seen him somewhere before."

"He is the man that brought the sack here?"

40 "I am almost sure of it."

"Then he is the ostensible Stephenson too, and sold every important citizen in this town with his bogus secret. Now if he has sent checks instead of money, we are sold too, after we thought we had escaped. I was beginning to feel fairly comfortable once more, after my night's rest, but the look of that envelope makes me sick. It isn't fat enough, \$8,500 in even the largest bank-notes makes more bulk than that."

"Edward, why do you object to checks?"

"Checks signed by Stephenson! I am resigned to take the \$8500 if it could come in bank notes—for it docs seem that it was so ordered Mary—but I have never had much courage, and I have not the pluck to try to market a check signed with that disastrous name It would be a trap That man tried to catch me, we escaped somehow or other, and now he is trying a new way If it is checks—"

"Oh Edward, it is *too* bad!" and she held up the checks and began to cry

"Put them in the fire! quick! we mustn't be tempted It is a trick to make the world laugh at us, along with the rest, and— Give them to *me*, since you can't do it!" He snatched them and tried to hold his grip till he could get to the stove, but he was human, he was a cashier, and he stopped a moment to make sure of the signature Then he came near to fainting

"Fan me, Mary, fan me! They are the same as 20 gold!"

"Oh, how lovely, Edward! Why?"

"Signed by Harkness What can the mystery of that be, Marv?"

"Edward, do you think—"

"Look here—look at this! Fifteen—fifteen—fifteen—thirty-four Thirty eight thousand five hundred! Marv, the sack isn't worth twelve dollars, and Harkness—apparently—has paid about par for it"

"And does it all come to us, do you think—instead 30 of the ten thousand?"

"Why, it looks like it And the checks are made to 'Bearer,' too"

"Is that good, Edward? What is it for?"

"A hint to collect them at some distant bank, I reckon Perhaps Harkness doesn't want the matter known What is that—a note?"

"Yes It was with the checks"

It was in the "Stephenson" handwriting, but there was no signature It said

I am a disappointed man Your honesty is beyond the reach of temptation I had a different idea about it, but I wronged you in that and I beg pardon, and do it sincerely I honor you—and that is sincere, too This town is not worthy to kiss the hem of your garment Dear sir, I made a square bet with myself that there were nineteen debauchable men in your self righteous community I have lost Take the whole pot, you are entitled to it

Richards drew a deep sigh, and said

"It seems written with fire—it burns so Mary—I am miserable again"

"I, too Ah, dear, I wish—"

"To think, Mary—he *believes* in me"

"Oh, don't Edward—I can't bear it"

"If those beautiful words were deserved, Mary—and God knows I believed I deserved them once—I think I could give the forty thousand dollars for them And I would put that paper away, as representing more than gold and jewels, and keep it always But now— We could not live in the shadow of its accusing presence, Mary"

He put it in the fire

A messenger arrived and delivered an envelope Richards took from it a note and read it, it was from Burgess

You saved me, in a difficult time I saved you last night It was at cost of a lie, but I made the sacrifice freely, and out of a grateful heart None in this village knows so well as I know how brave and good and noble you are At bottom you cannot respect me, knowing as you do of that matter of which I am accused, and by the general voice condemned but I beg that you will at least believe that I am a grateful man, it will help me to bear my burden

[Signed] Burgess

"Saved, once more And on such terms!" He put the note in the fire "I—I wish I were dead, Mary, I wish I were out of it all"

"Oh, these are bitter, bitter days, Edward The stabs, through their very generosity, are so deep—and they come so fast!"

Three days before the election each of two thousand voters suddenly found himself in possession of a prized memento—one of the renowned bogus double eagles Around one of its faces was stamped these words "THE REMARK I MADE TO THE POOR STRANGER WAS—" Around the other face was stamped these "CO, AND REFORM [SIGNED] PINKERTON" Thus the entire remaining refuse of the renowned joke was 40 emptied upon a single head, and with calamitous effect It revived the recent vast laugh and concentrated it upon Pinkerton, and Harkness's election was a walk over

Within twenty-four hours after the Richardses had received their checks their consciences were quieting down, discouraged, the old couple were learning to reconcile themselves to the sin which they had committed But they were to learn, now, that a sin takes on new and real terrors when there seems a chance

that it is going to be found out. This gives it a fresh and most substantial and important aspect. At church the morning sermon was of the usual pattern, it was the same old things said in the same old way they had heard them a thousand times and found them innocuous, next to meaningless, and easy to sleep under, but now it was different the sermon seemed to bristle with accusations, it seemed aimed straight and specially at people who were concealing deadly sins. After church they got away from the mob of 10 congratulators as soon as they could and hurried homeward, chilled to the bone as they did not know what—vague, shadowy, indefinite fears. And by chance they caught a glimpse of Mr. Burgess as he turned a corner. He paid no attention to their nod of recognition! He hadn't see it, but they did not know that. What could his conduct mean? It might mean—it might mean—oh, a dozen dreadful things. Was it possible that he knew that Richards could have cleared him of guilt in that bygone time, and had 20 been silently waiting for a chance to even up accounts? At home, in their distress they got to imagining that their servant might have been in the next room listening when Richards revealed the secret to his wife that he knew of Burgess's innocence, next, Richards began to imagine that he had heard the swish of a gown in there at that time, next, he was sure he *had* heard it. They would call Sarah in, on a pretext, and watch her face, if she had been betraying them to Mr. Burgess, it would show in her manner. 30 They asked her some questions—questions which were so random and incoherent and seemingly purposeless that the girl felt sure that the old people's minds had been affected by their sudden good fortune; the sharp and watchful gaze which they bent upon her frightened her, and that completed the business. She blushed, she became nervous and confused, and to the old people these were plain signs of guilt—guilt of some fearful sort or other—without doubt she was a spy and a traitor. When they were alone again they began to piece many unrelated things together and get horrible results out of the combination. When things had got about to the worst, Richards was delivered of a sudden gasp, and his wife asked,

"Oh, what is it?—what is it?"

"The note—Burgess's note! Its language was sarcastic, I see it now." He quoted. "'At bottom you cannot respect me, *knowing*, as you do, of *that matter*

of which I am accused'—oh, it is perfectly plain, now, God help me! He knows that I know! You see the ingenuity of the phrasing. It was a trap—and like a fool, I walked into it. And Mary—?"

"Oh, it is dreadful—I know what you are going to say—he didn't return your transcript of the pretended test-remark."

"No—kept it to destroy us with. Mary, he has exposed us to some already. I know it—I know it well. I saw it in a dozen faces after church. Ah, he wouldn't answer our nod of recognition—he knew what he had been doing!"

In the night the doctor was called. The news went around in the morning that the old couple were rather seriously ill—prostrated by the exhausting excitement growing out of their great windfall, the congratulations, and the late hours, the doctor said. The town was sincerely distressed, for these old people were about all it had left to be proud of, now.

Two days later the news was worse. The old couple were delirious, and were doing strange things. By witness of the nurses, Richards had exhibited checks—for \$8500? No—for an amazing sum—\$38,500! What could be the explanation of this gigantic piece of luck?

The following day the nurses had more news—and wonderful. They had concluded to hide the checks, lest harm come to them, but when they searched they were gone from under the patient's pillow— 30 vanished away. The patient said

"Let the pillow alone, what do you want?"

"We thought it best that the checks—"

"You will never see them again—they are destroyed. They came from Satan. I saw the hell-brand on them, and I knew they were sent to betray me to sin." Then he fell to gabbling strange and dreadful things which were not clearly understandable, and which the doctor admonished them to keep to themselves.

Richards was right; the checks were never seen again.

A nurse must have talked in her sleep, for within two days the forbidden gabblings were the property of the town: and they were of a surprising sort. They seemed to indicate that Richards had been a claimant for the sack himself, and that Burgess had concealed that fact and then maliciously betrayed it.

Burgess was taxed with this and stoutly denied it. And he said it was not fair to attach weight to the

chatter of a sick old man who was out of his mind. Still, suspicion was in the air, and there was much talk.

After a day or two it was reported that Mrs. Richards's delirious deliveries were getting to be duplicates of her husband's. Suspicion flamed up into conviction, now, and the town's pride in the purity of its one undiscredited important citizen began to dim down and flicker toward extinction.

Six days passed, then came more news. The old couple were dying. Richards's mind cleared in his latest hour, and he sent for Burgess. Burgess said:

"Let the room be cleared. I think he wishes to say something in privacy."

"No!" said Richards, "I want witnesses. I want you all to hear my confession, so that I may die a man, and not a dog. I was clean—artificially—like the rest, and like the rest I fell when temptation came. I signed a lie, and claimed the miserable sack. Mr. Burgess remembered that I had done him a service, and in gratitude (and ignorance) he suppressed my claim and saved me. You know the thing that was charged against Burgess years ago. My testimony, and mine alone, could have cleared him, and I was a coward, and left him to suffer disgrace—"

"No—no—Mr. Richards, you—"

"My servant betrayed my secret to him—"

"No one has betrayed anything to me—"

"—and then he did a natural and justifiable thing: he repented of the saving kindness which he had done me, and he *exposed* me—as I deserved—"

"Never!—I make oath—"

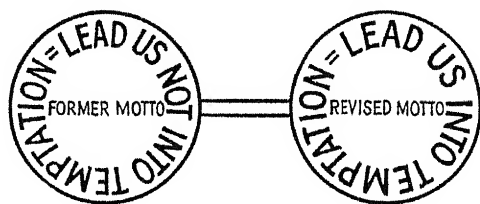
"Out of my heart I forgive him."

Burgess's impassioned protestations fell upon deaf ears, the dying man passed away without knowing that once more he had done poor Burgess a wrong. The old wife died that night.

The last of the sacred Nineteen had fallen a prey to the fiendish sack, the town was stripped the last rag of its ancient glory. Its mourning was not showy, but it was deep.

By act of the Legislature—upon prayer and petition—Hadleyburg was allowed to change its name to (never mind what—I will not give it away), and leave one word out of the motto that for many generations had graced the town's official seal.

It is an honest town once more, and the man will have to rise early that catches it napping again.



1899

The Turning-Point of My Life ⁵

I

If I understand the idea, the *Bazar* invites several of us to write upon the above text. It means the change in my life's course which introduced what must be regarded by me as the most *important* condition of my career. But it also implies—without intention, perhaps—that that turning point *itself* was the creator of the new condition. This gives it too much distinction, too much prominence, too much credit. It is only the *last* link in a very long chain of turning points commissioned to produce the cardinal

result, it is not any more important than the humblest of its ten thousand predecessors. Each of the ten thousand did its appointed share, on its appointed date, in forwarding the scheme, and they were all necessary, to have left out any one of them would have defeated the scheme and brought about *some other* result. I know we have a fashion of saying "such and such an event was the turning point in my life," but we shouldn't say it. We should merely grant that its place as *last* link in the chain makes it the most *conspicuous* link, in real importance it has no advantage over any one of its predecessors.

Perhaps the most celebrated turning-point recorded in history was the crossing of the Rubicon. Suetonius says:

Coming up with his troops on the banks of the Rubicon, he halted for a while, and revolving in his mind the im-

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portance of the step he was on the point of taking, he turned to those about him and said, "We may still retreat, but if we pass this little bridge, nothing is left for us but to fight it out in arms"

This was a stupendously important moment And all the incidents, big and little, of Cæsar's previous life had been leading up to it, stage by stage, link by link This was the *last* link—merely the last one, and no bigger than the others, but as we gaze back at it through the inflating mists of our imagination, it looks as big as the orbit of Neptune

You, the reader, have a *personal* interest in that link, and so have I, so has the rest of the human race It was one of the links in your life-chain, and it was one of the links in mine We may wait, now, with bated breath, while Cæsar reflects Your fate and mine are involved in his decision

While he was thus hesitating, the following incident occurred A person remarked for his noble mien and graceful aspect appeared close at hand, sitting and playing upon a pipe When not only the shepherds, but a number of soldiers also, flocked to listen to him, and some trumpeters among them, he snatched a trumpet from one of them, ran to the river with it, and, sounding the advance with a piercing blast, crossed to the other side Upon this, Cæsar exclaimed "Let us go whither the omens of the gods and the iniquity of our enemies call us. *The die is cast*"

So he crossed—and changed the future of the whole human race, for all time But that stranger was a link in Cæsar's life-chain, too, and a necessary one We don't know his name, we never hear of him again, he was very casual, he acts like an accident, but he was no accident, he was there by compulsion of *his* life-chain, to blow the electrifying blast that was to make up Cæsar's mind for him, and thence go piping down the aisles of history forever.

If the stranger hadn't been there! But he *was* And Cæsar crossed. With such results! Such vast events—each a link in the *human race's* life-chain; each event producing the next one, and that one the next one, and so on—the destruction of the republic; the founding of the empire, the breaking up of the empire; the rise of Christianity upon its ruins, the spread of the religion to other lands—and so on link by link took its appointed place at its appointed time, the discovery of America being one of them; our Revolution another, the inflow of English and other immigrants

another, their drift westward (my ancestors among them), another, the settlement of certain of them in Missouri, which resulted in *me*. For I was one of the unavoidable results of the crossing of the Rubicon. If the stranger, with his trumpet blast, had stayed away (which he *couldn't*, for he was an appointed link) Cæsar would not have crossed What would have happened, in that case, we can never guess We only know that the things that did happen would not have happened They might have been replaced by equally prodigious things, of course, but their nature and results are beyond our guessing But the matter that interests me personally is that I would not be *here* now, but somewhere else, and probably black—there is no telling Very well, I am glad he crossed And very really and thankfully glad, too, though I never cared anything about it before.

II

To me, the most important feature of my life is its literary feature I have been professionally literary something more than forty years. There have been many turning-points in my life, but the one that was the last link in the chain appointed to conduct me to the literary guild is the most *conspicuous* link in that chain *Because* it was the last one. It was not any more important than its predecessors All the other links have an inconspicuous look, except the crossing of the Rubicon, but as factors in making me literary they are all of the one size, the crossing of the Rubicon included.

I know how I came to be literary, and I will tell the steps that led up to it and brought it about

The crossing of the Rubicon was not the first one, it was hardly even a recent one, I should have to go back ages before Cæsar's day to find the first one. To save space I will go back only a couple of generations and start with an incident of my boyhood. When I was twelve and a half years old, my father died. It was in the spring. The summer came, and brought with it an epidemic of measles. For a time, a child died almost every day. The village was paralyzed with fright, distress, despair. Children that were not smitten with the disease were imprisoned in their homes to save them from the infection. In the homes there were no cheerful faces, there was no music, there was no singing but of solemn hymns, no voice but of prayer, no romping was allowed, no noise, no laughter, the family moved spectrally about on tiptoe, in a

ghostly hush I was a prisoner My soul was steeped in this awful dreariness—and in fear At some time or other every day and every night a sudden shiver shook me to the marrow and I said to myself, "There, I've got it! and I shall die" Life on these miserable terms was not worth living, and at last I made up my mind to get the disease and have it over, one way or the other I escaped from the house and went to the house of a neighbor where a playmate of mine was very ill with the malady When the chance offered I crept into his room and got into bed with him I was discovered by his mother and sent back into captivity But I had the disease, they could not take that from me I came near to dying The whole village was interested, and anxious, and sent for news of me every day, and not only once a day, but several times Everybody believed I would die, but on the fourteenth day a change came for the worse and they were disappointed

This was a turning-point of my life (Link number one) For when I got well my mother closed my school career and apprenticed me to a printer She was tired of trying to keep me out of mischief, and the adventure of the measles decided her to put me into more mischievous hands than hers

I became a printer, and began to add one link after another to the chain which was to lead me into the literary profession A long road, but I could not know that, and as I did not know what its goal was, or even that it had one, I was indifferent Also con-

A young printer wanders around a good deal, seeking and finding work and seeking again, when necessity commands N B Necessity is a *Circumstance*, Circumstance is man's master—and when Circumstance commands, he must obey, he may argue the matter—but it is his privilege, just as it is the honorable privilege of a fighting body to argue with the attraction of gravitation—but it won't do any good, he must obey I wandered for ten years, under the guidance and dictatorship of Circumstance, and finally arrived in a city of Iowa, where I worked several months Among the books that interested me in those days was one about the Amazon The traveler told in alluring tale of his long voyage up the great river from Para to the sources of the Madeira, through the heart of an enchanted land, a land wastefully rich in tropical wonders, a romantic land where all the birds and flowers and animals were of the

muscum varieties and where the alligator and the crocodile and the monkey seemed as much at home as if they were in the Zoo Also, he told an astonishing tale about *coca*, a vegetable product of miraculous powers asserting that it was so nourishing and so strength giving that the native of the mountains of the Madeira region would tramp up hill and down all day on a pinch of powdered coca and require no other sustenance

I was fired with a longing to ascend the Amazon Also with a longing to open up a trade in coca with all the world During months I dreamed that dream, and tried to contrive ways to get to Para and spring that splendid enterprise upon an unsuspecting planet But all in vain A person may *plan* as much as he wants to, but nothing of consequence is likely to come of it until the magician *Circumstance* steps in and takes the matter off his hands At last Circumstance came to my help It was in this way Circumstance, to help or hurt another man, made him lose a fifty-dollar bill in the street, and to help or hurt me, made me find it I advertised the find, and left for the Amazon the same day This was another turning point another link

Could Circumstance have ordered another dweller in that town to go to the Amazon and open up a world trade in coca on a fifty dollar basis and been obeyed? No, I was the only one There were other fools there—shoals and shoals of them—but they were not of my kind I was the only one of my kind

Circumstance is powerful, but it cannot work alone, it has to have a partner Its partner is man's *temperament*—his natural disposition His temperament is not his invention, it is *born* in him, and he has no authority over it, neither is he responsible for its acts He cannot change it, nothing can change it, nothing can modify it—except temporarily But it won't stay modified It is permanent, like the color of the man's eyes and the shape of his ears Blue eyes are gray in certain unusual lights, but they resume their natural color when that stress is removed

A Circumstance that will coerce one man will have no effect upon a man of a different temperament If Circumstance had thrown the bank-note in Cæsar's way, his temperament would not have made him start for the Amazon His temperament would have compelled him to do something with the money, but not that It might have made him advertise the note—and *wait* We can't tell Also, it might have made

him go to New York and buy into the Government, with results that would leave Tweed⁶ nothing to learn when it came his turn

Very well, Circumstance furnished the capital, and my temperament told me what to do with it. Sometimes a temperament is an ass. When that is the case the owner of it is an ass, too, and is going to remain one. Training, experience, association, can temporarily so polish him, improve him, exalt him that people will think he is a mule, but they will be mistaken. Artificially he *is* a mule, for the time being, but at bottom he is an ass yet, and will remain one.

By temperament I was the kind of person that *does* things. Does them, and reflects afterward. So I started for the Amazon without reflecting and without asking any questions. That was more than fifty years ago. In all that time my temperament has not changed, by even a shade. I have been punished many and many a time, and bitterly, for doing things and reflecting afterward, but these tortures have been of no value to me. I still do the thing commanded by Circumstance and Temperament, and reflect afterward. Always violently. When I am reflecting, on those occasions, even deaf persons can hear me think.

I went by the way of Cincinnati, and down the Ohio and Mississippi. My idea was to take ship, at New Orleans, for Para. In New Orleans I inquired, and found there was no ship leaving for Para. Also, that there never had *been* one leaving for Para. I reflected. A policeman came and asked me what I was doing, and I told him. He made me move on, and said if he caught me reflecting in the public street again he would run me in.

After a few days I was out of money. Then Circumstance arrived with another turning-point of my life—a new link. On my way down, I had made the acquaintance of a pilot. I begged him to teach me the river, and he consented. I became a pilot.

By and by Circumstance came again—introducing⁴⁰ the Civil War, this time, in order to push me ahead another stage or two toward the literary profession. The boats stopped running, my livelihood was gone.

Circumstance came to the rescue with a new turning-point and a fresh link. My brother was appointed secretary to the new Territory of Nevada, and he

invited me to go with him and help him in his office. I accepted.

In Nevada, Circumstance furnished me the silver fever and I went into the mines to make a fortune, as I supposed, but that was not the idea. The idea was to advance me another step toward literature. For amusement I scribbled things for the *Virginia City Enterprise*. One isn't a printer ten years without setting up acres of good and bad literature, and learning—unconsciously at first, consciously later—to discriminate between the two, within his mental limitations, and meantime he is unconsciously acquiring what is called a "style." One of my efforts attracted attention, and the *Enterprise* sent for me and put me on its staff.

And so I became a journalist—another link. By and by Circumstance and the *Sacramento Union* sent me to the Sandwich Islands for five or six months, to write up sugar. I did it, and threw in a good deal of extraneous matter that hadn't anything to do with sugar. But it was this extraneous matter that helped me to another link.

It made me notorious, and San Francisco invited me to lecture. Which I did. And profitably. I had long had a desire to travel and see the world, and now Circumstance had most kindly and unexpectedly hurled me upon the platform and furnished me the means. So I joined the "Quaker City Excursion."

When I returned to America, Circumstance was waiting on the pier—with the *last* link—the conspicuous, the consummating, the victorious link: I was asked to *write a book*, and I did it, and called it *The Innocents Abroad*. Thus I became at last a member of the literary guild. That was forty-two years ago, and I have been a member ever since. Leaving the Rubicon incident away back where it belongs, I can say with truth that the reason I am in the literary profession is because I had the measles when I was twelve years old.

III

Now what interests me, as regards these details, is not the details themselves, but the fact that none of them was foreseen by me, none of them was planned by me, I was the author of none of them. Circumstance, working in harness with my temperament created them all and compelled them all. I often offered help, and with the best intentions, but it was rejected—as a rule, uncourteously. I could never plan

⁶ William Marcv ("Boss") Tweed, New York politician, head of a group known as the Tweed Ring, later called Tammany Hall.

a thing and get it to come out the way I planned it. It came out some other way—some way I had not counted upon.

And so I do not admire the human being—as an intellectual marvel—as much as I did when I was young and got him out of books, and did not know him personally. When I used to read that such and such a general did a certain brilliant thing, I believed it. Whereas it was not so. Circumstance did it by help of his temperament. The circumstance would 10 have failed of effect with a general of another temperament: he might see the chance, but lose the advantage by being by nature too slow or too quick or too doubtful. Once General Grant was asked a question about a matter which had been much debated by the public and the newspapers, he answered the question without any hesitancy. “General, who planned the march through Georgia?” “The enemy!” He added that the enemy usually makes your plans for you. He meant that the enemy by neglect or 20 through force of circumstances leaves an opening for you, and you see your chance and take advantage of it.

Circumstances do the planning for us all, no doubt, by help of our temperaments. I see no great difference between a man and a watch, except that the man is conscious and the watch isn’t, and the man *tries* to plan things and the watch doesn’t. The watch doesn’t wind itself and doesn’t regulate itself—these things are done exteriorly. Outside influ- 30 ences, outside circumstances, wind the *man* and regulate him. Left to himself, he wouldn’t get regulated at all, and the sort of time he would keep would not be valuable. Some rare men are wonderful watches, with gold case, compensation balance, and all those things, and some men are only simple and sweet and humble Waterburys. I am a Waterbury. A Waterbury of that kind, some say.

A nation is only an individual multiplied. It makes plans and Circumstance comes and upsets them—or 40 enlarges them. Some patriots throw the tea overboard, some other patriots destroy a Bastille. The *plans* stop there, then Circumstance comes in, quite unexpectedly, and turns these modest riots into a revolution.

And there was poor Columbus. He elaborated a deep plan to find a new route to an old country. Circumstance revised his plan for him, and he found a new *world*. And *he* gets the credit of it to this day. He hadn’t anything to do with it.

Necessarily the scene of the real turning point of my life (and of yours) was the Garden of Eden. It was there that the first link was forged of the chain that was ultimately to lead to the emptying of me into the literary guild. Adam’s *temperament* was the first command the Deity ever issued to a human being on this planet. And it was the only command Adam would *never* be able to disobey. It said, “Be weak, be water, be characterless, be cheaply persuadable.” The later command, to let the fruit alone, was certain to be disobeyed. Not by Adam himself, but by his *temperament*—which he did not create and had no authority over. For the *temperament* is the man, the thing tricked out with clothes and named Man, 50 is merely its Shadow, nothing more. The law of the tiger’s temperament is, Thou shalt kill; the law of the sheep’s temperament is, Thou shalt not kill. To issue later commands requiring the tiger to let the fat stranger alone, and requiring the sheep to imbue its hands in the blood of the lion is not worth while, for those commands *can’t* be obeyed. They would invite to violations of the law of *temperament*, which is supreme, and takes precedence of all other authorities. I cannot help feeling disappointed in Adam and Eve. That is, in their temperaments. Not in *them*, poor helpless young creatures—afflicted with temperaments made out of butter, which butter was commanded to get into contact with fire and *be melted*. What I cannot help wishing is, that Adam and Eve had been postponed, and Martin Luther and Joan of Arc put in their place—that splendid pair equipped with temperaments not made of butter, but of asbestos. By neither sugary persuasions nor by hell fire could Satan have beguiled *them* to eat the apple. There would have been results! Indeed, yes. The apple would be intact to-day, there would be no human race, there would be no *you*, there would be no *me*. And the old, old creation day’s scheme of ultimately launching me into the literary guild would have been defeated.

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS (1837-1920)

William Dean Howells published nearly forty novels, many of them widely read, and was probably the most influential literary critic in the nation for over a quarter of a century. It is an odd fact, therefore, that to the present day there is no book-length biography of him. This neglect is even more surprising when one considers this typically American success story of a poor boy from the backwoods of Ohio, whose formal education scarcely extended through grammar school, who at the age of twenty-four became United States consul in Venice and a few years later the respected friend and associate of the leading writers of New England at the time when Boston was the literary capital of America.

The omission, however, is a significant aspect of the biographical story itself. Howells himself was fully aware of the literary possibilities of his personal experiences and published in all seven autobiographical books: *A Boy's Town* (1890), *My Year in a Log Cabin* (1893), *My Literary Passions* (1895), *Literary Friends and Acquaintance* (1900), *My Mark Twain* (1910), *New Leaf Mills* (1913), *Years of My Youth* (1916), and *Eighty Years and After* (1921). To this list could be added the "Pony Baker" stories, and in other stories and essays Howells obviously drew heavily upon personal history, especially the travel books, such as *A Day's Pleasure and Other Sketches* (1876). Anyone who set out to write a biography of Howells during his lifetime, therefore, would have had to compete with the author himself, who had already exploited the materials. Moreover, only Howells himself was capable of intimate presentation of the emotions and inner life of his childhood. *A Boy's Town* has never been as greatly admired as *Tom Sawyer*, but as a picture of life in a certain place and epoch it is more literal and, therefore, valuable as history.

During the height of William Dean Howells' public reputation, his autobiographical works were widely read, but the number of his readers has declined so rapidly since his death that today these books are far from well known. This decline explains why biographers have neglected his life since his death. Some of his work still lives, however, and literary historians

have never underrated his influence on the theory known in literary criticism as "realism." Howells is undoubtedly of major historical importance, and the biographies and reappraisals of his life and works will come yet.

The Howells family was originally Welsh, manufacturers of cloth in Wales, whence the author's grandfather came to America in 1808. After business experiments in New York, Virginia, and Ohio he finally settled in the latter state at Hamilton, where he kept a combination drug and book store. His son, William Cooper Howells, married Mary Dean, whose father was Irish and mother Pennsylvania "Dutch."

William Cooper Howells was sociable, idealistic, and impractical. He tried a number of occupations, from painting houses to editing small newspapers, but was never successful at any, and found it difficult to support his eight children. His father was Methodist, but, after a period of religious skepticism, he became a follower of Swedenborg. From 1837-40 he lived at Martin's Ferry, where William Dean was born. Then he moved to Hamilton—the "Boy's Town"—where he edited a Whig newspaper until Taylor was nominated for president. A rabid champion of Free Soil, Howells sold his paper rather than support Taylor. Then followed another unsuccessful newspaper experiment in Dayton, from 1848-50, succeeded by a still more rash venture, an attempt to manufacture paper on the Little Miami River. This project failed within a year, but it provided the future writer with materials for his two books, *My Year in a Log Cabin* and the thinly veiled autobiographical story, *New Leaf Mills*.

The Howells family had few books, but William Dean learned to spell in the printing office, and in setting type acquired a facility in handling words which turned him, first, to journalism, and then to literature. In 1851-52 father and son went to Columbus, Ohio, where the son worked in a printing office and the father reported the sessions of the Legislature. Between intervals of publishing other small newspapers, one in Ashtabula and another in Jefferson, they returned again to Columbus in 1856-58, this time William Cooper Howells as clerk for the

Legislature and William Dean as reporter for a Columbus paper

These years in Columbus were fruitful ones for young Howells. From 1858-61 he was successively exchange editor and editorial writer for the *Ohio State Journal*. He met other people with literary interests, including Miss Elmhurst C. Mead of Vermont, his future wife, and he apparently read a great deal. He had already taught himself to read French, Spanish, and Italian, and had received instruction in German. He began contributing to the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Saturday Press* in New York. With his friend, J. J. Piatt, he published his first volume of poems, called *Poems of Two Friends*. These writings attracted sufficient attention for William Dean Howells to be invited to write a campaign biography of Abraham Lincoln.

This biography was written from notes collected by someone else, and it probably had small literary merit, but it is said to have been widely read in the West, and President Lincoln was sufficiently grateful to appoint the twenty-four year-old author to the consulship of Venice at a salary of \$1,500 a year. The first thing that Howells did with the proceeds from his book was to visit New England, where Lowell, who had accepted some of his verses for the *Atlantic*, introduced him to leading authors of the region. Hawthorne wrote, in a note of introduction to be carried to Emerson, "I find this young man worthy." In *Literary Friends and Acquaintance* Howells has given a charming account of his impressions of the region and the famous men whom he visited on this trip.

In 1861 Howells sailed for Italy, where he served four years as consul in Venice. On December 24, 1862, in Paris, he married Miss Mead, who had come to Europe with her brother, a sculptor. Their first child was born in Italy. This period of the Civil War in America was a happy time for the Howells family. William Dean studied Italian literature, did considerable traveling and sightseeing, and recorded his fresh and untutored impressions in essays which won him a secure place in American letters after his return home. The success of *Venetian Life* (1866) prepared the way for *Italian Journeys* (1867). He was most interested in people, avoided the kind of effusions over architecture and the past usually found in travel books, and gently poked fun at some of the Byronic and romantic associations which had become trite. He was another "Innocent Abroad," no less independent than Mark Twain, but more sympathetic and urbane. These books contributed to the growth of Howells' literary talent, and the later records of his travels are still readable. *Tuscan Cities*

(1886), *London Films* (1905), *Certain Delightful English Towns* (1906), *Seven English Cities* (1909), and *Hither and Thither in Germany* (1920).

On his return to America in 1865, Howells was employed for a year in New York by E. L. Godkin, editor of the *Nation*, at a salary of \$40 a week. The following year he was offered an assistant editorship on the *Atlantic Monthly*, and he moved to Cambridge, where he lived for twenty years. In 1872 he became the editor, a position of considerable prestige and influence. In 1886 he moved to New York and took over the department called "Editor's Study" in *Harper's Magazine*, which he wrote until 1891. After occupying other editorial positions he returned to *Harper's* in 1900 to write the "Easy Chair" until his death. These were years of steady success, adequately remunerative, and increasingly rewarding in personal associations and literary prestige. Yale, Harvard, Columbia, and Oxford Universities conferred honorary degrees upon this self-educated author, and Harvard, Columbia, and Johns Hopkins offered him professorships in English and Comparative Literature.

But despite the fact that Howells was largely self-educated, his intellectual progress followed a consistent curve from his youthful admiration of Goldsmith, Irving, and Cervantes—especially Cervantes—to his mature theory of "realism," which he advocated as a critic and attempted to practice in his own novels. As a boy his romantic longing for foreign lands made Irving's *Conquest of Granada* and *The Alhambra* appealing to him, but in the end he found the common sense of eighteenth century rationalism more permanently satisfactory. The satirical Cervantes, also, turned him against romanticism. Later he recalled that at fourteen he wrote pastorals in imitation of Pope and "was growing more literary and less human," but Shakespeare, and especially Falstaff, quickly humanized him. "There I found a world appreciable to experience. There I found joy and sorrow mixed, and nothing abstract or typical, but everything standing for itself and not for some other thing." Dickens also increased Howells' democratic sympathies. "His view of the world and of society was instinctively sane and reasonable, even when it was most impossible."

Lowell's critical essays aroused Howells' interest in major poets, though he failed to share Lowell's enthusiasm for Spenser. Chaucer, however, he found like Cervantes, warmly human in his satire. In his youth Howells admired most Tennyson and Longfellow, perhaps because they were both didactic, for he was tone-deaf and probably never appreciated their prosodic music. And though he learned to read Heine in German, even this great lyricist taught him mainly

that "the expression of literature" must not be "different from the expression of life." In nearly everything he read, in fact, Howells found increasing evidence that that literature is best which most nearly expresses life. In Italy he studied the eighteenth-century dramatist, Carlo Goldoni, in whom he discovered the foundation of a "realistic" theory of literature.

Howells' first literary ambition, however, was to be a poet. While in Columbus he submitted some verses to Lowell, who accepted them for the *Atlantic Monthly* after making sure that they were not plagiarized from Heine's works—then one of Howells' "literary passions." In all, Howells published five books of poetry, from the collaboration, *Poems of Two Friends* (1860), to the mature works, *No Love Lost*, *A Romance of Travel* (1869), *Poems* (1873—revised in 1885, 1901), *Stops of Various Quills* (1895), and *The Mother and the Father, Dramatic Passages* (1909). Some poems were also included in *The Daughter of the Storage* (1916). But despite his continued interest in poetic expression, Howells never got beyond a weak imitation of Longfellow, Tennyson, and Heine. Longfellow's hexameters especially had a fatal fascination for him, resulting in facility without substance. When his verse approached originality, it became prosy, for prose was his natural medium of expression.

Howells himself was slow to discover his ability in the two genres for which he was especially gifted, criticism and fiction. In fact, it is doubtful that he ever fully appreciated the importance of criticism, though it was the attempt to exemplify his literary theories that produced his many novels, and his critical influence finally surpassed his other literary achievements. As late as 1910 he declared in *Essays in Criticism* that "the critical faculty is lower than the imitative." Critics lag behind creators, they have "condemned whatever was, from time to time, fresh and vital in literature. . . . Every literary movement has been violently opposed at the start." Perhaps Howells did not fully realize that as the American exponent of a new literary movement he was, in the process of aiding and explaining the basic ideas of the movement, creating a substantial body of critical writing, first in book reviews in the *Atlantic* and then in collected essays and books of criticism.

This theory, as finally clarified in *Criticism and Fiction* (1891), reflected the age in its dependence on science. Literature, he thought, was "a plant which springs from the nature of a people, and draws its forces from their life." Like the botanist, the critic should be a dispassionate classifier, placing "a book in such a light that the reader shall know its class,

its function, its characteristics." From the Spanish novelist, Valdés, Howells borrowed the metaphysical doctrine (akin to Walt Whitman's cosmic democracy) that "all is equally grand, all is equally just, all is equally beautiful, because all is equally divine." Consequently, declares Howells, "Let not the novelists, then, endeavor to add anything to reality, to turn it and twist it, to restrict it." Or again, in life the realist finds nothing insignificant, all tells for destiny and character, nothing that God has made is contemptible. He cannot look upon human life and declare this or that thing unworthy of notice, any more than the scientist can declare a fact of the material world beneath the dignity of his inquiry.

The most active years of Howells' campaign for uncompromising realism were from 1886 to 1892, while he conducted "The Editor's Study" for *Harper's*. During this time he championed Zola, whom most American critics were denouncing as filthy and immoral, and he greatly admired Turgenev. But he saw in Zola a moral force exposing vice and degeneration for clinical treatment, and it was Tolstoi whom Howells found most congenial. "He has been to me the final consciousness, which he speaks of so wisely in his essay on Life. . . . The supreme art in literature had its highest effect in making me set art forever below humanity." This doctrine culminated in a book which Howells called *Literature and Life* (1902), a book containing a phrase and a point of view which has profoundly influenced the teaching of literature in American schools for a generation.

After 1892, when Howells took over the editorship of *Cosmopolitan Magazine* and later (1900-20) in his "Easy Chair" department for *Harper's*, he was less aggressive in the fight for "realism." This was due partly to a sense of failure, romanticism still flourished, as the popularity of Robert Louis Stevenson testified. Also Howells had not realized that a theory and literature which had grown out of the life of the times might not be immediately accepted by the people of that time (as with Whitman, whom Howells also did not understand or appreciate). But his own disposition, and his experience with the gentler aspects of American experience, resulted in his accepting as typical a reality which seemed tame to such later realists and naturalists as Jack London, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser. Furthermore, he held the Victorian belief that "morality penetrates all things," and hoped that "the time will come when the beast-man will be so far subdued and tamed in us that the memory of him in literature will be left to perish." Unable to put into practice his own doctrine that the novelist should in no way restrict the truthful presentation of reality, Howells would even

permit the expurgation of objectionable passages in the classics. He thought that French and Russian novelists dealt with subjects that 'decent' Anglo-Saxons should not, and he even censured Tolstoi. He believed that America did not have the sex problems treated in French and Russian fiction. His squeamishness concerning sex may explain why he could never admire Flaubert.

This Victorian conception of decency, however, was not inconsistent with Howells' purpose as a novelist, which was, he explained as early as 1872 in his Preface to *Then Wedding Journey*, to present man not in his "heroic or occasional phases," but "in his habitual moods of vacancy and tiresomeness." Consequently, we find in this and Howells' later novels characters who are intentionally commonplace and bourgeois. They are not far removed from the ignoramus whom Ring Lardner was later to satirize with the bitterness of hatred, but Howells, with sympathetic tolerance, wished "to think his shallow and feeble thoughts, to be moved by his dumb, stupid desires, to be dimly illumined by his stunted inspirations, to share his foolish prejudices, to practice his obtuse selfishness."

In his earlier fiction Howells' theory restricted him in many ways. His presentation of common, average characters, while embracing a large fraction of humanity, excluded the exotic, the abnormal, or the picturesque. He tried to avoid statistically improbable coincidence, contrived plot, and dramatic endings. He wished to write "from the beginning forward, and never from the ending backward," as Poe, with his emphasis upon literary effect, tried deliberately to do. Life, Howells argued, has no endings, and the novel, a transcript of life, should be true to the final unfinished page.

The author should also keep himself out of the story and not, like Thackeray, "stand about in his scene, talking it over with his hands in his pockets, interrupting the action, and spoiling the illusion in which alone the truth of art resides." But this detachment did not prevent Howells from drawing upon his own experience and emotions in creating his stories. In fact, his choosing a slice of life for literal treatment necessitated his choosing a slice fairly closely related to his own life. Furthermore, his sympathetic identification of himself with common humanity prevented criticism and satire, though the reader may become impatient with the shallow thought or boresome triviality of his characters' speech.

In *Then Wedding Journey* (1872) Howells made an easy transition from writing travel sketches to fiction. There is no plot, it is simply a detailed narrative

of two commonplace people on a honeymoon to Niagara, Montreal, and Quebec. The couple, Isabel and Basil March, are as average as Howells' theory could demand, and there is nothing subtle or "literary" about their impressions. In a chapter found only in editions prior to 1887 we are given a glimpse of the Marches' marriage twelve years later. The idealistic expectations of the honeymooners have evaporated, especially for Isabel. Marriage has become a drab monotony. But in the sequel, *Their Silver Wedding Journey* (1899), disillusionment has given way to a not unhappy resignation. Mr. and Mrs. March appear many times in subsequent novels, always as representatives of average domestic life. Howells is almost polemical in his insistence that love at first sight or "they married and lived happily-ever-afterward" is not common enough in reality to be truthful in fiction.

Howells' women are likely to be stubborn, illogical, and sometimes hysterical, his men mildly self-centered, egotistical, and unable to comprehend the baffling complexity of women. Their relationships and still more the contacts between different social strata, provide the main substance of these early novels. The product is a mild comedy of manners, faintly reminiscent of Jane Austen—a sort of Cambridge version. In *A Modern Instance* (1882), however, Howells treated the theme of an incompatible marriage with greater boldness. The husband sinks into complete moral degeneration, while the wife is so insipid that the modern reader is not likely to have much sympathy for her, or for the conscience-racked New Englander who feels damned because he had loved her in silence before she was divorced.

The Howells novel which has best survived the test of time is *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1884). Here we have another comedy of manners, but the story is most memorable for the strength of character which enables Lapham to rise above his economic misfortunes. As a wealthy capitalist he was egotistical, narrow, loud, vulgar, and antisocial. It is primarily a character study, but the story also reveals Howells' growing interest in economic and social problems.

Many critics have thought that Howells underwent a great change of social outlook after he moved to New York just before his fiftieth birthday. Some have attributed his increasing concern with social injustice to his having moved away from Cambridge and the conservative influence of the *Atlantic Monthly*. Howells himself gave Tolstoi credit for having brought him "the knowledge of myself in ways that I had not dreamt of before, and began at

last to discern my relations to the race, without which we are nothing" But recent investigation has brought to light other influences besides Tolstoi. One of these was the American Socialist leader, Laurence Gronlund, whose speeches and writings brought Howells into sympathetic contact with Marxian philosophy. Another source was the Norwegian novelist, Bjørstjerne Bjørnson, whom Howells befriended in Cambridge, and whose democratic books he praised in reviews in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Henry George, Edward Bellamy, and other American reformers also caused Howells to take up the study of politics, economics, and sociology, and as early as 1872 he had introduced a department on "Politics" into the pages of the *Atlantic*. National events, too, like the trial following the Haymarket riot in Chicago in 1886, the streetcar strike in New York, and the general industrial strife of the times, aroused Howells' sympathy for labor.

In *Silas Lapham* the ethics of capitalism is a secondary motif, but *Annie Kilburn* (1888) treats the problem specifically. Annie returns from abroad with the intention of using her wealth to alleviate the suffering of the poor, but she learns from Mr. Peck, whose belief in social equality we may assume to be Howells' own, that money "can sometimes create a bond of gratitude . . . but it can't create sympathy between rich and poor . . . Because sympathy—common feeling—can spring only from like experiences, like hopes, like fears. And money can't buy these." In *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1889) the setting is New York during the streetcar strike. All metropolitan classes except the destitute are represented in this sociological study. *April Hopes* (1888) presents what had come to be a favorite theme with Howells, the conflict between puritanism and social democracy. The point of view of *The Quality of Mercy* (1892) is that of a pessimistic determinism which reminds one of Mark Twain's "What is Man?" The hero is a millionaire robber, but he "isn't the disease, he's merely the symptom. . . . He was a mere creature of circumstances—like the rest of us! His environment made him rich, and his environment made him a rogue."

The most penetrating treatment of these economic, social, and ethical problems is found in Howells' utopian romance, *The Traveler from Altruria* (1894). The conversations between Mr. Homos, the visitor from utopian Altruria, and representatives of American society contain such penetratingly ironic commentaries on the shams and pretences of the free enterprise system that one wonders why Howells' contemporaries were not scandalized. This mystery is particularly puzzling in view of the fact that in his

later novels he continued to hammer away at the abuses satirized by the Altrurian. But perhaps Howells was too kindly and sympathetic to make a deep impression as a satirist, despite the irony of this book and *Through the Eye of the Needle* (1907).

The man who began his career by disliking Thackeray never learned to hate strongly enough to rival the great satirists. Farce was more suited to his temperament, and he wrote nearly two dozen light dramas, beginning with *The Parlor Car* (1878) and ending with *Parting Friends* (1911). He particularly liked to build a comedy around an absurd episode in a sleeping car, an elevator, a depot, a smoking car, or to poke fun at some foible like feminine rodent-phobia, as in *The Mouse-Trap* (1889). Many of these were produced on the professional stage, but they have been most successful in private theatricals. *The Mouse-Trap* was played in London by an all-star cast, including Ellen Terry, and was warmly praised by George Bernard Shaw. These little dramas are still interesting, they reveal a side of Howells which his novels and criticism do not.

Still another curious side of this author who started out to be an unflinching realist is his later interest in dreams, telepathy, and psychic phenomena, as in *The Shadow of a Dream* (1890), *Questionable Shapes* (1903), and *Between the Dark and the Daylight* (1907). These lead one to suspect that he was familiar with the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research. Since there was during the period of these books considerable popular curiosity about such subjects, we have in Howells' treatment of the theme another indication of his close contact with contemporary thought, fads, and events. This fact marks Howells as a perennial journalist.

Journalism, in fact, is the key to Howells' weaknesses and virtues as a writer. He not only learned to write in printing and newspaper office, but he remained all his life so alert to the contemporary scene that he wrote always for a contemporary audience. Not only his comedy of manners transcribed from observations of people whom he saw on steamer, in railway station, or on the streets of Boston and New York, but his themes of domestic life and his theses echoing the doctrines of the socialistic and economic reformers were as contemporary as the morning newspaper. This generalization applies also to his aesthetic taste and the literary style which his generation thought the last word in refinement and "purity," a word often used to characterize his style. The great writers—like Melville, Whitman, and Henry James—are often almost unreadable to their own generation, while the author whose style is most congenial to his contemporaries may be inane to a

later generation. Perhaps Howells' clarity and simplicity have contributed to his decline in reputation. Critics have not had to struggle with his meaning and been stimulated to explain him, as they have with Melville, Whitman, and James. But this neglect of Howells is undeserved, and it is regrettable, for neither his portrayal of average human nature in American democracy nor his criticism of the hypoc-

risies which thwart democracy is out of date. His influence, however, has not been lost, for later realists, naturalists, and social critics have picked up the themes and the theories where Howells dropped them, and in their sharper edged style his thoughts still live, nevertheless the student will find it rewarding to go back to the source in Howells' own writings.

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FROM

*Criticism and Fiction*¹

xx

Of the finer kinds of romance, as distinguished from the novel, I would even encourage the writing, though it is one of the hard conditions of romance that its personages starting with a *parti pris* can rarely be characters with a living growth, but are apt to be types, limited to the expression of one principle, simple, elemental, lacking the God-given complexity of motive which we find in all the human beings we know

Hawthorne, the great master of the romance, had the insight and the power to create it anew as a kind in fiction, though I am not sure that *The Scarlet Letter* and the *Blithedale Romance* are not, strictly speaking, novels rather than romances. They do not play with some old superstition long outgrown, and they do not invent a new superstition to play with, but deal with things vital in every one's pulse. I am not saying that what may be called the fantastic romance—the romance that descends from Frankenstein² rather than *The Scarlet Letter*—ought not to be. On the contrary, I should grieve to lose it, as I should grieve to lose the pantomime or the comic opera, or many other graceful things that amuse the passing hour, and help us to live agreeably in a world where men actually sin, suffer, and die. But it belongs to the decorative arts, and though it has a high place among them, it cannot be ranked with the works of the imagination—the works that represent and body forth human experience. Its ingenuity can always afford a refined pleasure, and it can often, at some risk to itself, convey a valuable truth.

Perhaps the whole region of historical romance might be reopened with advantage to readers and writers who cannot bear to be brought face to face with human nature, but require the haze of distance or a far perspective, in which all the disagreeable details shall be lost. There is no good reason why these harmless people should not be

amused or their little preferences indulged

But here, again, I have my modest doubts, some recent instances are so fatuous, as far as the portrayal of character goes, though I find them admirably contrived in some respects. When I have owned the excellence of the staging in every respect, and the conscience with which the carpenter (as the theatrical folks say) has done his work, I am at the end of my praises. The people affect me like persons of our generation made up for the parts; well trained, well costumed but actors, and almost amateurs. They have the quality that makes the histrionics of amateurs endurable, they are ladies and gentlemen, the worst, the wickedest of them, is a lady or gentleman behind the scene.

Yet, no doubt it is well that there should be a reversion to the earlier types of thinking and feeling, to earlier ways of looking at human nature, and I will not altogether refuse the pleasure offered me by the poetic romancer or the historical romancer because I find my pleasure chiefly in Tolstoi and James³ and Galdós⁴ and Valdés and Thomas Hardy and Tourguénief,⁵ and Balzac at his best.

The reversions or counter-currents in the general tendency of a time are very curious, and are worthy tolerant study. They are always to be found, perhaps they form the exception that establishes the rule; at least they distinguish it. They give us performances having an archaic charm by which, by-and-by, things captivate for reasons unconnected with their inherent beauty. They become quaint, and this is reason enough for liking them, for returning to them, and in art for trying to do them again. But I confess that I like better to go forward than to go backward, and it is saying very little to say that I value more such a novel as Mr. James's *Tragic Muse* than all the romantic attempts since Hawthorne. I call Mr. James a novelist because there is yet no name for the literary kind he has invented, and so none for the inventor. The fatuity of the story merely as a story is some-

¹ Published in 1891—original text reprinted here. Howells made some slight changes for a version published in 1910. This essay defines Howells' concept of realism, decency in fiction, the limits of the critic's function, and kindred subjects.

² By Mary Godwin Shelley, 1818, the ghastly story of a monster.

³ Howells had published Henry James' stories in the *Atlantic*.

⁴ Benito Pérez Galdós (1845–1920), Spanish novelist and playwright, who wrote a series of historical romances (16 volumes), *Episodios Nacionales* (National Episodes).

⁵ Alexander Turgenev [English spelling varies] (1844–1885), Russian novelist.

thing that must early impress the story teller who does not live in the stone age of fiction and criticism. To spin a yarn for the yarn's sake, that is an ideal worthy of a nineteenth-century Englishman, doting in forgetfulness of the English masters and grovelling in ignorance of the Continental masters, but wholly impossible to an American of Mr. Henry James's modernity. To him it must seem like the lies swapped between men after the ladies have left the table and they are sinking deeper and deeper into their cups and growing dimmer and dimmer behind their cigars. To such a mind as his the story could never have value except as a means, it could not exist for him as an end, it could be used only illustratively, it could be the frame, not possibly the picture. But in the mean time the kind of thing he wished to do, and began to do, and has always done, amid a stupid clamor, which still lasts, that it was not a story, had to be called a novel, and the wretched victim of the novel habit (only a little less intellectually degraded than the still more miserable slave of the theatre habit), who wished neither to perceive nor to reflect, but only to be acted upon by plot and incident, was lost in an endless trouble about it. Here was a thing called a novel, written with extraordinary charm, interesting by the vigor and vivacity with which phases and situations and persons were handled in it, inviting him to the intimacy of characters divined with creative insight, making him witness of motives and emotions and experiences of the finest import, and then suddenly requiring him to be man enough to cope with the question itself, not solving it for him by a marriage or a murder, and not spoon victualling him with a moral minced small and then thinned with milk and water, and familiarly flavored with sentimentality or religiosity. I can imagine the sort of shame with which such a writer as Mr. James, so original and so clear-sighted, may sometimes have been tempted by the outcry of the nurslings of fable, to give them of the diet on which they had been pampered to imbecility, or to call together his characters for a sort of round up in the last chapter.

XXI

It is no doubt such work as Mr. James's that an English essayist (Mr. E. Hughes)⁶ has chiefly in

⁶ Elian Hughes. *Present Day Novels: American versus English, Some Aspects of Humanity*. London, 1889.

mind, in a study of the differences of the English and American novel. He defines the English novel as working from within outwardly, and the American novel as working from without inwardly. The definition is very surprisingly accurate, and the critic's discovery of this fundamental difference is carried into particulars with a distinctness which is as unfailing as the courtesy he has in recognizing the present superiority of American work. He seems to think, however, that the English principle is the better, though why he should think so he does not make so clear. It appears a belated and rather voluntary effect of patriotism, disappointing in a philosopher of his degree, but it does not keep him from very explicit justice to the best characteristics of our fiction. "The American novelist is distinguished for the intellectual grip which he has of his characters. He penetrates below the crust, and he recognizes no necessity of the crust to anticipate what is beneath. He utterly discards heroics, he often even discards anything like a plot. His story proper is often no more than a natural predicament. It is no stage view we have of his characters, but one behind the scenes. We are brought into contact with no strained virtues, illumined by strained lights upon strained heights of situation. Whenever he appeals to the emotions it would seem to be with an appeal to the intellect too, because he weaves his story of the finer, less self-evident though common threads of human nature, seldom calling into play the grosser and more powerful strain. Everywhere in his pages we come across acquaintances undisguised. The characters in an American novel are never unapproachable to the reader. The naturalness, with the every-day atmosphere which surrounds it, is one great charm of the American novel. It is throughout examinative, discursive, even more—quizzical. Its characters are undergoing, at the hands of the author, calm, interested observation. He is never caught identifying himself with them, he must preserve impartiality at all costs, but the touch of nature is always felt, the feeling of kinship always follows. The strength of the American novel is its optimistic faith. If out of this persistent hopefulness it can evolve for men a new order of trustfulness, a tenet that between man and man there should be less suspicion, more confidence, since human nature sanctions it, its mission will have

been more than an æsthetic, it will have been a moral one."

Not all of this will be found true of Mr. James, but all that relates to artistic methods and characteristics will, and the rest is true of American novels generally. For the most part in their range and tendency they are admirable. I will not say they are all good, or that any of them is wholly good, but I find in nearly every one of them a disposition to regard our life without the literary glasses so long thought 10 desirable, and to see character, not as it is in other fiction, but as it abounds outside of all fiction. This disposition sometimes goes with poor enough performance, but in some of our novels it goes with performance that is excellent, and at any rate it is for the present more valuable than evenness of performance. It is what relates American fiction to the only living movement in imaginative literature, and distinguishes by a superior freshness and authenticity any group of American novels from a similarly 20 accidental group of English novels, giving them the same good right to be as the like number of recent Russian novels, French novels, Spanish novels, Italian novels, Norwegian novels.

It is the difference of the American novelist's ideals from those of the English novelist that gives him his advantage, and seems to promise him the future. The love of the passionate and the heroic, as the Englishman has it, is such a crude and unwholesome thing, so deaf and blind to all the most delicate and 30 important facts of art and life, so insensible to the subtle values in either that its presence or absence makes the whole difference, and enables one who is not obsessed by it to thank Heaven that he is not as that other man is.

There can be little question that many refinements of thought and spirit which every American is sensible of in the fiction of this continent, are necessarily lost upon our good kin beyond seas, whose thumb-fingered apprehension requires something gross and 40 palpable for its assurance of reality. This is not their fault, and I am not sure that it is wholly their misfortune: they are made so as not to miss what they do not find, and they are simply content without those subtleties of life and character which it gives us so keen a pleasure to have noted in literature. If they perceive them at all it is as something vague and diaphanous, something that flimsily wavers before their sense and teases them, much as the beings of

an invisible world might mock one of our material frame by intimations of their presence. It is with reason, therefore, on the part of an Englishman, that Mr. Henley⁷ complains of our fiction as a shadow-land, though we find more and more in it the faithful report of our life, its motives and emotions, and all the comparatively etherealized passions and ideals that influence it.

In fact, the American who chooses to enjoy his birthright to the full, lives in a world wholly different from the Englishman's, and speaks (too often through his nose) another language: he breathes a rarefied and nimble air full of shining possibilities and radiant promises which the fog-and-soot-clogged lungs of those less-favored islanders struggle in vain to fill themselves with. But he ought to be modest in his advantage, and patient with the coughing and sputtering of his cousin who complains of finding himself in an exhausted receiver on plunging into 50 one of our novels. To be quite just to the poor fellow, I have had some such experience as that myself in the atmosphere of some of our more attenuated romances.

Yet every now and then I read a book with perfect comfort and much exhilaration, whose scenes the average Englishman would gasp in. Nothing happens, that is, nobody murders or debauches anybody else, there is no arson or pillage of any sort, there is not a ghost, or a ravaging beast, or a hair-breadth escape, or a shipwreck, or a monster of self-sacrifice, or a lady five thousand years old in the whole course of the story, "no promenade, no band of music, no-sing!" as Mr. Du Maurier's⁸ Frenchman said of the meet for a fox-hunt. Yet it is all alive with the keenest interest for those who enjoy the study of individual traits and general conditions as they make themselves known to American experience.

These conditions have been so favorable hitherto (though they are becoming always less so) that they easily account for the optimistic faith of our novel which Mr. Hughes notices. It used to be one of the disadvantages of the practice of romance in America, which Hawthorne more or less whimsically lamented, that there were so few shadows and inequalities in our broad level of prosperity,⁹ and it is one of the

⁷ W. E. Henley (1849-1903), English editor and author. Wrote the well-known poem "Invictus."

⁸ George Du Maurier (1834-1906) British artist and novelist, author of *Peter Ibbetson* and *Trilby*.

⁹ In Preface to *The Marble Faun*.

reflections suggested by Dostoevsky's¹⁰ novel, *The Crime and the Punishment*, that whoever struck a note so profoundly tragic in American fiction would do a false and mistaken thing—as false and as mistaken in its way as dealing in American fiction with certain nudities which the Latin peoples seem to find edifying. Whatever their deserts, very few American novelists have been led out to be shot, or finally exiled to the rigors of a winter at Duluth, and in a land where journeymen carpenters and plumbers strike for four dollars a day the sum of hunger and cold is comparatively small, and the wrong from class to class has been almost inappreciable, though all this is changing for the worse. Our novelists, therefore, concern themselves with the more smiling aspects of life, which are the more American, and seek the universal in the individual rather than the social interests. It is worth while, even at the risk of being called commonplace, to be true to our well to do actualities, the very passions themselves seem to be softened and modified by conditions which formerly at least could not be said to wrong any one, to cramp endeavor, or to cross lawful desire. Sin and suffering and shame there must always be in the world, I suppose, but I believe that in this new world of ours it is still mainly from one to another one, and oftener still from one to one's self. We have death too in America, and a great deal of disagreeable and painful disease, which the multiplicity of our patent medicines does not seem to cure, but this is tragedy that comes in the very nature of things, and is not peculiarly American, as the large, cheerful average of health and success and happy life is. It will not do to boast, but it is well to be true to the facts, and to see that, apart from these purely mortal troubles, the race here has enjoyed conditions in which most of the ills that have darkened its annals might be averted by honest work and unselfish behavior.

Fine artists we have among us, and right-minded as far as they go, and we must not forget this at evil moments when it seems as if all the women had taken to writing hysterical improprieties, and some of the men were trying to be at least as hysterical in despair of being as improper. If we kept to the complexion of a certain school—which sadly needs a school-master—we might very well be despondent,

but, after all, that school is not representative of our conditions or our intentions. Other traits are much more characteristic of our life and our fiction. In most American novels, vivid and graphic as the best of them are, the people are segregated if not sequestered, and the scene is sparsely populated. The effect may be in instinctive response to the vacancy of our social life, and I shall not make haste to blame it. There are few places, few occasions among us, in which a novelist can get a large number of polite people together, or at least keep them together. Unless he carries a snap camera his picture of them has no probability, they affect one like the figures perfunctorily associated in such deadly old engravings as that of "Washington Irving and his Friends."¹¹ Perhaps it is for this reason that we excel in small pieces with three or four figures, or in studies of rustic communities, where there is proximity if not society. Our grasp of more urbane life is feeble, most attempts to assemble it in our pictures are failures, possibly because it is too transitory, too intangible in its nature with us, to be truthfully represented as really existent.

I am not sure that the Americans have not brought the short story nearer perfection in the all-round sense than almost any other people, and for reasons very simple and near at hand. It might be argued from the national hurry and impatience that it was a literary form peculiarly adapted to the American temperament, but I suspect that its extraordinary development among us is owing much more to more tangible facts. The success of American magazines which is nothing less than prodigious, is only commensurate with their excellence. Their sort of success is not only from the courage to decide what ought to please, but from the knowledge of what does please, and it is probable that, aside from the pictures, it is the short stories which please the readers of our best magazines. The serial novels they must have, of course, but rather more of course they must have short stories, and by operation of the law of supply and demand, the short stories, abundant in quantity and excellent in quality, are forthcoming because they are wanted. By another operation of the same law, which political economists have more recently taken account of, the demand follows the

¹⁰ Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevski (1821-81), Russian author of *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.

¹¹ Drawing by F. O. C. Darley (1822-88), engraving by Thomas Oldham Barlow (1824-89) in London, widely circulated in U. S.

supply, and short stories are sought for because there is a proven ability to furnish them, and people read them willingly because they are usually very good. The art of writing them is now so disciplined and diffused with us that there is no lack either for the magazines or for the newspaper "syndicates" which deal in them almost to the exclusion of the serials. In other countries the feuilleton of the journals is a novel continued from day to day, but with us the papers, whether daily or weekly, now more rarely ¹⁰ print novels, whether they get them at first hand from the writers, as a great many do, or through the syndicates, which purvey a vast variety of literary wares, chiefly for the Sunday editions of the city journals. In the country papers the short story takes the place of the chapters of a serial which used to be given.

XXIV

One of the great newspapers the other day ²⁰ invited the prominent American authors to speak their minds upon a point in the theory and practice of fiction which had already vexed some of them. It was the question of how much or how little the American novel ought to deal with certain facts of life which are not usually talked of before young people, and especially young ladies. Of course the question was not decided, and I forget just how far the balance inclined in favor of a larger freedom in the matter. But it certainly inclined that way; one or ³⁰ two writers of the sex which is somehow supposed to have purity in its keeping (as if purity were a thing that did not practically concern the other sex, preoccupied with serious affairs) gave it a rather vigorous tilt to that side. In view of this fact it would not be the part of prudence to make an effort to dress the balance; and indeed I do not know that I was going to make any such effort. But there are some things to say, around and about the subject, which I should like to have some one else say, and which I ⁴⁰ may myself possibly be safe in suggesting.

One of the first of these is the fact, generally lost sight of by those who censure the Anglo-Saxon novel for its prudishness, that it is really not such a prude after all, and that if it is sometimes apparently anxious to avoid those experiences of life not spoken of before young people, this may be an appearance only. Sometimes a novel which has this shuffling air, this effect of truckling to propriety, might defend

itself, if it could speak for itself, by saying that such experiences happened not to come within its scheme, and that, so far from maiming or mutilating itself in ignoring them, it was all the more faithfully representative of the tone of modern life in dealing with love that was chaste, and with passion so honest that it could be openly spoken of before the tenderest society, but at dinner. It might say that the guilty intrigue, the betrayal, the extreme flirtation even, was the exceptional thing in life, and unless the scheme of the story necessarily involved it, that it would be bad art to lug it in, and as bad taste as to introduce such topics in a mixed company. It could say very justly that the novel in our civilization now always addresses a mixed company, and that the vast majority of the company are ladies, and that very many, if not most, of these ladies are young girls. If the novel were written for men and for married women alone, as in continental Europe, it might be altogether different. But the simple fact is that it is not written for them alone among us, and it is a question of writing, under cover of our universal acceptance, things for young girls to read which you would be put out-of-doors for saying to them, or of frankly giving notice of your intention, and so cutting yourself off from the pleasure—and it is a very high and sweet one—of appealing to these vivid, responsive intelligences, which are none the less brilliant and admirable because they are innocent.

One day a novelist who liked, after the manner of other men, to repine at his hard fate, complained to his friend, a critic, that he was tired of the restriction he had put upon himself in this regard; for it is a mistake, as can be readily shown, to suppose that others impose it. "See how free those French fellows are!" he rebelled. "Shall we always be shut up to our tradition of decency?"

"Do you think it's much worse than being shut up to their tradition of indecency?" said his friend.

Then that novelist began to reflect, and he remembered how sick the invariable motive of the French novel made him. He perceived finally that, convention for convention, ours was not only more tolerable, but on the whole was truer to life, not only to its complexion, but also to its texture. No one will pretend that there is not vicious love beneath the surface of our society; if he did, the fetid explosions of the divorce trials would refute him; but if he pretended that it was in any just sense characteristic

of our society, he could be still more easily refuted. Yet it exists, and it is unquestionably the material of tragedy, the stuff from which intense effects are wrought. The question, after owning this fact, is whether these intense effects are not rather cheap effects. I incline to think they are, and I will try to say why I think so, if I may do so without offence. The material itself, the mere mention of it, has an instant fascination, it arrests, it detains, till the last word is said, and while there is anything to be hinted. This is what makes a love intrigue of some sort all but essential to the popularity of any fiction. Without such an intrigue the intellectual equipment of the author must be of the highest, and then he will succeed only with the highest class of readers. But any author who will deal with a guilty love intrigue holds all readers in his hand, the highest with the lowest, as long as he hints the slightest hope of the smallest potential naughtiness. He need not at all be a great author, he may be a very shabby wretch, if he has but the courage or the trick of that sort of thing. The critics will call him "vulgar" and "passionate," decent people will be ashamed to have been lined by him, but the low average will only ask another chance of flocking into his net. If he happens to be an able writer, his really fine and costly work will be unhindered, and the lure to the appetite will be chiefly remembered. There may be other qualities which make reputations for other men, but in his case they will count for nothing. He pays this penalty for his success in that kind, and every one pays some such penalty who deals with some such material. It attaches in like manner to the triumphs of the writers who now almost form a school among us, and who may be said to have established themselves in an easy popularity simply by the study of exotic shivers and fervors. They may find their account in the popularity, or they may not, there is no question of the popularity.

But I do not mean to imply that their case covers the whole ground. So far as it goes, though, it ought to stop the mouths of those who complain that fiction is enslaved to propriety among us. It appears that of a certain kind of impropriety it is free to give us all it will, and more. But this is not what serious men and women writing fiction mean when they rebel against the limitations of their art in our civilization. They have no desire to deal with nakedness, as painters and sculptors freely do in the worship

of beauty, or with certain facts of life as the stage does, in the service of sensation. But they ask why, when the conventions of the plastic and histrionic arts liberate their followers to the portrayal of almost any phase of the physical or of the emotional nature, an American novelist may not write a story on the lines of *Anna Karenina*¹² or *Madame Bovary*¹³ or *Sappho*¹⁴ they put aside, and from Zola's¹⁵ work they avert their eyes. They do not condemn him or Daudet,¹⁶ necessarily, or accuse their motives, they leave them out of the question, they do not want to do that kind of thing. But they do sometimes wish to do another kind, to touch one of the most serious and sorrowful problems of life in the spirit of Tolstoi and Flaubert, and they ask why they may not. At one time, they remind us, the Anglo-Saxon novelist did deal with such problems—De Foe in his spirit, Richardson in his, Goldsmith in his. At what moment did our fiction lose this privilege? In what fatal hour did the Young Girl arise and seal the lips of Fiction, with a touch of her finger, to some of the most vital interests of life?

Whether I wished to oppose them in their aspiration for greater freedom, or whether I wished to encourage them, I should begin to answer them by saying that the Young Girl had never done anything of the kind. The manners of the novel have been improving with those of its readers, that is all. Gentlemen no longer swear or fall drunk under the table, or abduct young ladies and shut them up in lonely country-houses, or so habitually set about the ruin of their neighbors' wives, as they once did. Generally, people now call a spade an agricultural implement, they have not grown decent without having also grown a little squeamish, but they have grown comparatively decent, there is no doubt about that. They require of a novelist whom they respect unquestionable proof of his seriousness if he proposes to deal with certain phases of life, they require a sort of scientific decorum. He can no longer expect to be received on the ground of entertainment only, he assumes a higher function, something like that of a physician or a priest, and they expect him to be bound by laws as strict as those of such professions,

¹² Novel by Tolstoy, 1878.

¹³ Novel by Gustave Flaubert, 1857.

¹⁴ Allusion to *Sappho* (1881), a novel by Alphonse Daudet.

¹⁵ Howells was one of the first critics in America to defend Zola's naturalistic novels.

¹⁶ Alphonse Daudet (1840-97), French humorist and novelist.

they hold him solemnly pledged not to betray them or abuse their confidence. If he will accept the conditions, they give him their confidence, and he may then treat to his greater honor, and not at all to his disadvantage, of such experiences, such relations of men and women as George Eliot treats in *Adam Bede*, in *Daniel Deronda*, in *Romola*, in almost all her books, such as Hawthorne treats in the *Scarlet Letter*, such as Dickens treats in *David Copperfield*, such as Thackeray treats in *Pendennis*, and glances at in every one of his fictions, such as most of the masters of English fiction have at some time treated more or less openly. It is quite false or quite mistaken to suppose that our novels have left untouched these most important realities of life. They have only not made them their stock in trade, they have kept a true perspective in regard to them, they have relegated them in their pictures of life to the space and place they occupy in life itself, as we know it in England and America. They have kept a correct proportion, knowing perfectly well that unless the novel is to be a map, with everything scrupulously laid down in it, a faithful record of life in far the greater extent could be made to the exclusion of guilty love and all its circumstances and consequences.

I justify them in this view not only because I hate what is cheap and meretricious, and hold in peculiar loathing the cant of the critics who require "passion" as something in itself admirable and desirable in a novel, but because I prize fidelity in the historian of feeling and character. Most of these critics who demand "passion" would seem to have no conception of any passion but one. Yet there are several other passions: the passion of grief, the passion of avarice, the passion of pity, the passion of ambition, the passion of hate, the passion of envy, the passion of devotion, the passion of friendship; and all these have a greater part in the drama of life than the passion of love, and infinitely greater than the passion of guilty love. Wittingly or unwittingly, English fiction and American fiction have recognized this truth, not fully, not in the measure it merits, but in greater degree than most other fiction.

XXV

Who can deny that fiction would be incomparably stronger, incomparably truer, if once it could tear off the habit which enslaves it to the celebration chiefly of a single passion, in one phase or another,

and could frankly dedicate itself to the service of all the passions, all the interests, all the facts? Every novelist who has thought about his art knows that it would, and I think that upon reflection he must doubt whether his sphere would be greatly enlarged if he were allowed to treat freely the darker aspects of the favorite passion. But, as I have shown, the privilege, the right to do this, is already perfectly recognized. This is proved again by the fact that serious criticism recognizes as master-works (I will not push the question of supremacy) the two great novels which above all others have moved the world by their study of guilty love. If by any chance, if by some prodigious miracle, any American should now arise to treat it on the level of *Anna Karenina* and *Madame Bovary*, he would be absolutely sure of success, and of fame and gratitude as great as those books have won for their authors.

But what editor of what American magazine would print such a story?

Certainly I do not think any one would, and here our novelist must again submit to conditions. If he wishes to publish such a story (supposing him to have once written it), he must publish it as a book. A book is something by itself, responsible for its character, which becomes quickly known, and it does not necessarily penetrate to every member of the household. The father or the mother may say to the child, "I would rather you wouldn't read that book;" if the child cannot be trusted, the book may be locked up. But with the magazine and its serial the affair is different. Between the editor of a reputable English or American magazine and the families which receive it there is a tacit agreement that he will print nothing which a father may not read to his daughter, or safely leave her to read herself. After all, it is a matter of business; and the insurgent novelist should consider the situation with coolness and common-sense. The editor did not create the situation; but it exists, and he could not even attempt to change it without many sorts of disaster. He respects it, therefore, with the good faith of an honest man. Even when he is himself a novelist, with ardor for his art and impatience of the limitations put upon it, he interposes his veto, as Thackeray did in the case of Trollope when a contributor approaches forbidden ground.

It does not avail to say that the daily papers teem with facts far fouler and deadlier than any which

fiction could imagine That is true, but it is true also that the sex which reads the most novels reads the fewest newspapers and, besides, the reporter does not command the novelist's skill to fix impressions in a young girl's mind or to suggest conjecture The magazine is a little despotic, a little arbitrary, but unquestionably its favor is essential to success, and its conditions are not such narrow ones You cannot deal with Tolstoi's and Flaubert's subjects in the absolute artistic freedom of Tolstoi and Flaubert, since De Foe, that is unknown among us, but if you deal with them in the manner of George Eliot, of Thackeray, of Dickens, of society you may deal with them even in the magazines There is no other restriction upon you All the horrors and miseries and tortures are open to you, your pages may drop blood, sometimes it may happen that the editor will even exact such strong material from you But probably he will require nothing but the observance of the convention in question, and if you do not yourself prefer bloodshed he will leave you free to use all sweet and peaceable means of interesting his readers

Believe me, it is no narrow field he throws open to you, with that little sign to keep off the grass up at one point only Its vastness is still almost unexplored, and whole regions in it are unknown to the fictionist Dig anywhere, and do but dig deep enough, and you strike riches, or, if you are of the mind to range, the gentler climes, the softer temperatures, the serener skies are all free to you, and are so little visited that the chance of novelty is greater among them

XXVIII

But if the humanitarian impulse has mostly disappeared from Christmas fiction,¹⁷ I think it has never so generally characterized all fiction One may refuse to recognize this impulse, one may deny that it is in any greater degree shaping life than ever before, but no one who has the current of literature under his eye can fail to note it there People are thinking and feeling generously, if not living justly, in our time, it is a day of anxiety to be saved from the curse that is on selfishness, of eager question how others shall be helped, of bold denial that the conditions in which we would fain have rested are sacred or immutable Especially in America, where

the race has gained a height never reached before, the eminence enables more men than ever before to see how even here vast masses of men are sunk in misery that must grow every day more hopeless, or embroiled in a struggle for mere life that must end in enslaving and imbruting them

Art, indeed, is beginning to find out that if it does not make friends with Need it must perish It perceives that to take itself from the many and leave them no joy in their work, and to give itself to the few whom it can bring no joy in their idleness, is an error that kills This has long been the burden of Ruskin's message, and if we can believe William Morris, the common people have heard him gladly, and have felt the truth of what he says "They see the prophet in him rather than the fantastic rhetorician, as more superfine audiences do," and the men and women who do the hard work of the world have learned from him and from Morris that they have a right to pleasure in their toil, and that when justice is done them they will have it In all ages poetry has affirmed something of this sort, but it remained for ours to perceive it and express it somehow in every form of literature But this is only one phase of the devotion of the best literature of our time to the service of humanity No book written with a low or cynical motive could succeed now, no matter how brilliantly written, and the work done in the past to the glorification of mere passion and power, to the deification of self, appears monstrous and hideous The romantic spirit worshipped genius, worshipped heroism, but at its best, in such a man as Victor Hugo, this spirit recognized the supreme claim of the lowest humanity Its error was to idealize the victims of society, to paint them impossibly virtuous and beautiful, but truth, which has succeeded to the highest mission of romance, paints these victims as they are, and bids the world consider them not because they are beautiful and virtuous, but because they are ugly and vicious, cruel, filthy, and only not altogether loathsome because the divine can never wholly die out of the human The truth does not find these victims among the poor alone, among the hungry, the houseless, the ragged but it also finds them among the rich, cursed with the aimlessness, the satiety, the despair of wealth, wasting their lives in a fool's paradise of shows and semblances, with nothing real but the misery that comes of insincerity and selfishness.

¹⁷ Howells had discussed Christmas and holiday fiction in Chapters XXVI and XXVII

It is needless for me to say, either to the many whom my opinions on this point incense or to the few who accept them, that I do not think the fiction of our own time even always equal to this work, or perhaps more than seldom so. But as I have before expressed, to the still-reverberating discontent of two continents, fiction is now a finer art than it has ever been hitherto, and more nearly meets the requirements of the infallible standard. I have hopes of real usefulness in it, because it is at last building on the only sure foundation, but I am by no means certain that it will be the ultimate literary form, or will remain as important as we believe it is destined to become. On the contrary, it is quite imaginable that when the great mass of readers, now sunk in the foolish joys of mere fable, shall be lifted to an interest in the meaning of things through the faithful portrayal of life in fiction, then fiction the most faithful may be superseded by a still more faithful form of contemporaneous history. I willingly leave to the precise character of this form to the more robust imagination of readers whose minds have been nurtured upon romantic novels, and who really have an imagination worth speaking of, and confine myself, as usual, to the hither side of the regions of conjecture.

The art which in the mean time disdains the office of teacher is one of the last refuges of the aristocratic spirit which is disappearing from politics and society, and is now seeking to shelter itself in æsthetics. The pride of caste is becoming the pride of taste, but as before, it is averse to the mass of men, it consents to know them only in some conventionalized and artificial guise. It seeks to withdraw itself, to stand aloof, to be distinguished, and not to be identified. Democracy in literature is the reverse of all this. It wishes to know and to tell the truth, confident that consolation and delight are there, it does not care to paint the marvellous and impossible for the vulgar many, or to sentimentalize and falsify the actual for the vulgar few. Men are more like than unlike one another: let us make them know one another better, that they may be all humbled and strengthened with a sense of their fraternity. Neither arts, nor letters, nor sciences, except as they somehow, clearly or obscurely, tend to make the race better and kinder, are to be regarded as serious interests, they are all lower than the rudest crafts that feed and house and clothe, for except they do this office they are idle; and they cannot do this except from and through the truth.

1891

FROM

*My Year in a Log Cabin*¹⁸

A BIT OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I

In the fall of the year 1850 my father removed with his family from the city of Dayton, where we had been living, to a property on the Little Miami River, to take charge of a saw-mill and grist-mill, and superintend their never-accomplished transformation into paper-mills. The property belonged to his brothers—physicians and druggists—who were to follow later, when they had disposed of their business in town. My father left a disastrous newspaper enter-

prise behind him when he came out to apply his mechanical taste and his knowledge of farming to the care of their place. Early in the century his parents had brought him to Ohio from Wales, and his boyhood was passed in the new country, where pioneer customs and traditions were still rife, and for him it was like renewing the wild romance of those days to take up once more the life in a log-cabin interrupted by forty years' sojourn in matter-of-fact dwellings of frame and brick.

¹⁸ From *My Year in a Log Cabin*. Copyright 1893 by Harper & Brothers, copyright 1920 by Mildred Howells and John Mead Howells. Reprinted by kind permission of Miss Howells. This account, one of several which Howells wrote about his boyhood, shows some of the literary influences that he experienced as a boy in the Ohio backwoods.

40 and open skies, all our walks had led into them and under them. It was the fond dream of his boys to

realize the trials and privations which he had painted for them in such rosy hues and even if the only clap boarded dwelling on the property had not been occupied by the miller, we should have disdained it for the log-cabin in which we took up our home till we could build a new house

Our cabin stood close upon the road, but behind it broadened a corn field of eighty acres. They still built log cabins for dwellings in that region forty years ago, but ours must have been nearly half a century old when we went into it. It had been recently vacated by an old Virginian couple, who had long occupied it, and we decided that it needed some repairs to make it habitable even for a family inured to hardship by dauntless imaginations, and accustomed to retrospective discomforts of every kind.

So before we all came out of it a deputation of adventurers put it in what rude order they could. They glazed the narrow windows, they relaid the rotten floor, they touched (too sketchily, as it afterward appeared) the broken roof, and they papered the walls of the ground floor rooms. Perhaps it was my father's love of literature which inspired him to choose newspapers for this purpose, at any rate, he did so, and the effect, as I remember it, was not without its decorative qualities.

He had used a barrel of papers bought at the nearest post office, where they had been refused by the persons to whom they had been experimentally sent by the publisher, and the whole first page was taken up by a story, which broke off in the middle of a sentence at the foot of the last column, and tantalized us forever with fruitless conjecture as to the fate of the hero and heroine. I really suppose that a cheap wall-paper could have been got for the same money, though it might not have seemed so economical.

I am not sure that the use of the newspapers was not a tributary reminiscence of my father's pioneer life, I cannot remember that it excited any comment in the neighbors who were frank with their opinions of everything else we did. But it does not greatly matter, the newspapers hid the walls and the stains with which our old Virginian predecessor, who had the habit of chewing tobacco in bed, had ineffaceably streaked the plastering near the head of his couch.

The cabin, rude as it was, was not without its sophistications, its concessions to the spirit of mod-

ern luxury. The logs it was built of had not been left rounded, as they grew, but had been squared in a saw mill, and the crevices between them had not been chinked with moss and crusted with clay in the true pioneer fashion, but had been neatly plastered with mortar, and the chimney, instead of being a structure of clay covered sticks, was solidly laid in courses of stone.

Within, however, it was all that could be asked for by the most romantic of pioneer families. It was six feet wide and a yard deep, its cavernous maw would easily swallow a back-log eighteen inches through, and we piled in front the sticks of hickory cord-wood as high as we liked. We made a perfect trial of it when we came out to put the cabin in readiness for the family, and when the hickory had dropped into a mass of tinkling, snapping, bristling embers we laid our rashers of bacon and our slices of steak upon them, and tasted with the appetite of tired youth the flavors of the camp and the wildwood in the captured juices.

I suppose it took a day or two to put the improvements which I have mentioned upon the cabin, but I am not certain. At night we laid our mattresses on the sweet new oak plank of the floor, and slept hard—in every sense. Once I remember waking, and seeing the man who was always the youngest of his boys sitting upright on his bed.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Oh, resting!" he answered, and that gave us one of the Heaven-blessed laughs with which we could blow away almost any cloud of care or pain.

II

In due time the whole family took up its abode in the cabin. The household furniture had been brought out and bestowed in its scanty space, the bookcase had been set up, and the unbound books packed in easily accessible barrels.

There yet remained some of our possessions to follow, chief of which was the cow, for in those simple days people kept cows in town, and it fell to me to help my father drive her out to her future home. We got on famously, talking of the way side things so beautiful in the beautiful autumnal day, all panoplied in the savage splendor of its painted leaves, and of the poems and histories so dear to the boy who limped barefooted by his father's side, with his

eye on the cow and his mind on Cervantes and Shakespeare, on—

The glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome ¹⁹

But the cow was very slow—far slower than the boy's thoughts—and it had fallen night and was already thick dark when we had made the twelve miles, and stood under the white-limbed phantasmal sycamores beside the tail-race of the grist-mill, and questioned how we should get across with our charge. We did not know how deep the water was, but we knew it was very cold, and we would rather not wade it

The only thing to do seemed to be for one of us to run up under those sycamores to the saw-mill, cross the head-race there, and come back to receive the cow on the other side of the tail-race. But the boy could not bring himself either to go or stay. I do not know just how it is with a boy's world now, ²⁰ but at that time it was a very dangerous world. It was full of ghosts, for one thing, and it abounded in Indians on the war-path, and amateurs of kidnapping and murder of all sorts.

The kind-hearted father urged, but he would not compel. You cannot well use force with a boy with whom you have been talking literature and philosophy for half a day. We could see the lights in the cabin cheerfully twinkling, and we shouted to those within, but no one heard us. We called and called in ³⁰ vain. Nothing but the cold rush of the tail-race, the dry rustle of the sycamore leaves, and the homesick howling of the cow replied.

We determined to drive her across, and pursue her with sticks and stones through the darkness beyond, and then run at the top of our speed to the saw-mill, and get back to take her in custody again. We carried out our part of the plan perfectly, but the cow had apparently not entered into it with intelligence or sympathy.

When we reached the tail-race again she was nowhere to be found, and no appeals of "Boss" or "Suky" or "Subose" availed. She must have instantly turned again, and retraced, in the darkness which seemed to have swallowed her up, the weary steps of

the day, for she was found in her old home in town the next morning. At any rate she had abandoned the father to the conversation of his son, for the time being, and the son had nothing to say

VI

The winter, which was so sore a trial for my mother in the log-cabin, and was not, perhaps, such a poetic rapture for my father as he had hoped, was a long delight to their children.

The centre of our life in the cabin was, of course, the fireplace, whose hugeness and whose mighty fires remained a wonder with us. There was a crane in the chimney and dangling pot-hooks, and until the cooking-stove could be set up in an adjoining shed the cooking had to be done on the hearth, and the bread baked in a Dutch-oven in the hot ashes. We had always heard of this operation, which was a necessity of early days, and nothing else, perhaps, realized ²⁰ them so vividly for us as the loaf laid in the iron-lidded skillet, which was then covered with ashes and heaped with coals.

I am not certain that the bread tasted any better for the romantic picturesqueness of its experience, or that the commel, mixed warm from the mill and baked on an oak plank set up before the fire, had merits beyond the hoe-cake of art; but I think there can be no doubt that new corn grated to meal when just out of the mill, and then moulded and put in like manner to brown in the glow of such embers, would still have the sweetness that was incomparable then. When the maple sap started in February, we tried the scheme we had cherished all winter of making with it tea which should be in a manner self-sugared. But the scheme was a failure—we spoiled the sap without sweetening the tea.

We sat up late before the big fire at night, our faces burning in the glow, and our backs and feet freezing in the draft that swept in from the im- ⁴⁰ perfectly closing door, and then we boys climbed to our bed in the loft. We reached it by a ladder, which we should have been glad to pull up after us as a protection against Indians in the pioneer fashion; but, with the advancement of modern luxury, the ladder had been nailed to the floor.

Once aloft, however, we were in a domain sacred to the past. The rude floor rattled and wavered loosely under our tread, and the window in the

¹⁹ To the glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome
Edgar Allan Poe, *To Helen*

gable stood open or shut at its own will. There were cracks in the shingles, through which we could see the stars, when there were stars, and which, when the first snow came, let the flakes sift in upon the floor. I should not like to step out of bed into a snow-wreath in the morning now, but then I was glad to do it, and so far from thinking that or anything in our life a hardship, I counted it all joy.

Our barrels of paper-covered books were stowed away in that loft, and overhauling them one day I found a paper copy of the poems of a certain Henry W. Longfellow, then wholly unknown to me, and while the old grist mill, whistling and wheezing to itself, made a vague music in my ears, my soul was filled with this new, strange sweetness. I read the "Spanish Student" there, and the "Coplas de Manrique," and the solemn and ever beautiful "Voices of the Night."

There were other books in those barrels which I must have read also, but I remember only these, that spirited me again to Spain, where I had already been with Irving, and led me to attack seriously the old Spanish grammar which had been knocking about our house ever since my father bought it from a soldier of the Mexican War.

But neither these nor any other books made me discontented with the small boy's world about me. They made it a little more populous with visionary shapes, but that was well, and there was room for them all. It was not darkened with cares, and the duties in it were not many.

We had always worked, and we older boys had our axes now, and believed ourselves to be clearing a piece of woods which covered a hill belonging to the milling property. The timber was black-walnut and oak and hickory, and I cannot think we made much havoc in it, but we must have felled some of the trees, for I remember helping to cut them into saw logs with the cross cut saw, and the rapture we had in starting our logs from the brow of the hill and watching their whirling rush to the bottom. We experimented, as boys will, and we felled one large hickory with the saw instead of the axe, and barely escaped with our lives when it suddenly split near the bark, and the butt shot out between us. I preferred buckeye and sycamore trees for my own axe, they were of no use when felled, but they chopped delightfully.

VII

They grew abundantly on the island which formed another feature of our oddly distributed property. This island was by far its most fascinating feature, and for us boys it had all the charm and mystery which have in every land and age endeared islands to the heart of man. It was not naturally an island, but had been made so by the mill races bringing the water from the dam and emptying into the river again below the mills. Yet no atoll in the far Pacific could have been more satisfactory to us. It was low and flat, and was half under water in every spring freshet, but it had precious areas grown up to tall iron weeds, which, withering and hardening in the frost, supplied us with the spears and darts for our Indian fights.

The island was always our battleground and it resounded in the long afternoons with the war cries of the encountering tribes. We had a book in those days called *Western Adventure*, which was made up of tales of pioneer and frontier life, and we were constantly reading ourselves back into that life. I have wondered often since who wrote or compiled that book, we had printed it ourselves in D[ayton], from the stereotype plates of some temporary publisher whose name is quite lost to me. This book and *Howe's Collections for the History of Ohio*, were full of stories of the backwoodsmen and warriors who had made our State a battleground for nearly fifty years, and our own life in the log cabin gave new zest to the tales of "Simon Kenton, the Pioneer," and "Simon Girty, the Renegade," of the captivity of Crawford, and his death at the stake, of the massacre of the Moravian Indians at Gnadenhutten, of the defeat of St. Clair and the victory of Wayne, of a hundred other wild and bloody incidents of our annals. We read of them at night till we were afraid to go up the ladder to the ambuscade of savages in our loft, but we fought them over by day with undaunted spirits. With our native romance I sometimes mingled with my own reading a strain of old world poetry, and "Hamet el Zegri" and the "Unknown Spanish Knight," encountered in the Vega before Granada on our island, while Adam Poe and Bigfoot were taking breath from their deadly struggle in the waters of the Ohio.

FROM

*A Traveler from Altruria*²⁰

I

I confess that with all my curiosity to meet an Altrurian, I was in no hospitable mood toward the traveler when he finally presented himself, pursuant to the letter of advice sent me by the friend who introduced him. It would be easy enough to take care of him in the hotel, I had merely to engage a room for him, and have the clerk tell him his money was not good if he tried to pay for anything. But I had swung fairly into my story, its people were about me all the time, I dwelt amidst its events and places, and I did not see how I could welcome my guest among them, or abandon them for him. Still, when he actually arrived, and I took his hand as he stepped from the train, I found it less difficult to say that I was glad to see him than I expected. In fact, I was glad, for I could not look upon his face without feeling a glow of kindness for him. I had not the least trouble in identifying him, he was so unlike all the Americans who dismounted from the train with him, and who all looked hot, worried and anxious. He was a man no longer young, but in what we call the heyday of life, when our own people are so absorbed in making provision for the future that they may be said not to live in the present at all. This Altrurian's whole countenance, and especially his quiet, gentle eyes, expressed a vast contemporaneity, with bounds

of leisure removed to the end of time, or, at least, this was the effect of something in them which I am obliged to report in rather fantastic terms. He was above the middle height and he carried himself vigorously. His face was sun-burnt, or sea-burnt, where it was not bearded, and although I knew from my friend's letter that he was a man of learning, and distinction in his own country, I should never have supposed him a person of scholarly life, he was so far from sickled over with anything like the pale cast of thought.²¹ When he took the hand I offered him in my half-hearted welcome he gave it a grasp that decided me to confine our daily greetings to something much less muscular.

"Let me have your bag," I said, as we do when we meet people at the train, and he instantly bestowed a rather heavy valise upon me, with a smile in his benignant eyes, as if it had been the greatest favor. "Have you got any checks?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, in very good English, but with an accent new to me. "I bought two." He gave them to me and I passed them to our hotel porter, who was waiting there with the baggage cart. Then I proposed that we should walk across the meadow to the house, which is a quarter of a mile or so from the station. We started, but he stopped suddenly and looked back over his shoulder. "Oh, you needn't be troubled about your trunks," I said. "The porter will get them to the house all right. They'll be in your room by the time we get there."

"But he's putting them into the wagon himself," said the Altrurian.

"Yes, he always does that. He's a strong young fellow. He'll manage it. You needn't—" I could not finish saying he need not mind the porter, he was rushing back to the station, and I had the mortification of seeing him take an end of each trunk and help the porter toss it into the wagon, some lighter pieces he put in himself, and he did not stop till all the baggage the train had left was disposed of.

I stood holding his valise unable to put it down in my embarrassment at this eccentric performance, which had been evident not to me alone, but to all

²⁰ From *A Traveler from Altruria*. Copyright 1894 by Harper & Brothers, copyright 1921 by Mildred Howells and John Mead Howells. Reprinted by kind permission of Miss Howells.

The publication of this book climaxed Howells' thinking on economic and social questions. He had always been interested in the social background of his characters, but in *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1889) he began to probe at the evils of American capitalism. In his drift toward socialism Howells was influenced by Tolstoy, Bjornson, Henry George, and Edward Bellamy, the Haymarket trial (in which four Chicago anarchists were convicted in 1887 on purely circumstantial evidence of throwing a bomb) and by the lectures of a visitor in socialism, Laurence Gronlund. These sources are discussed in W. F. Taylor, "On the Origin of Howells' Interest in Economic Reform," *American Literature*, Vol. II, pp. 3-14 (March 1930). J. W. Getzels, "William Dean Howells and Socialism," *Science and Society*, Vol. II, pp. 37-86 (Summer, 1935). Conrad Wright, "The Sources of Mr. Howells' Socialism," *Science and Society*, Vol. II, pp. 512-17 (Fall 1938) and George Arms, "The Literary Background of Howells' Social Criticism," *American Literature*, Vol. XIV, pp. 260-76 (November 1942). The study by Arms is the most complete and useful.

²¹ Cf. *Hamlet*, III, 1, 53.

the people who arrived by the train, and all their friends who came from the hotel to meet them. A number of these passed me on the trolley-coach, and a lady, who had got her husband with her for over Sunday, and was in very good spirits, called gayly down to me. "Your friend seems fond of exercise!"

"Yes," I answered dryly, the sparkling repartee which ought to have come to my help failed to show up. But it was impossible to be vexed with the Altrurian when he returned to me, unruffled by his bout with the baggage, and serenely smiling.

"Do you know," he said, "I fancied that good fellow was ashamed of my helping him. I hope it didn't seem a reflection upon him in any way before your people? I ought to have thought of that."

"I guess we can make it right with him. I dare say he felt more surprised than disgraced. But we must make haste a little now, your train was half an hour late, and we shall not stand so good a chance for supper if we are not there pretty promptly."

"No?" said the Altrurian. "Why?"

"Well," I said, with evasive lightness, "first come, first served, you know. That's human nature."

"Is it?" he returned, and he looked at me as one does who suspects another of joking.

"Well, isn't it?" I retorted, but I hurried to add, "Besides, I want to have time after supper to show you a bit of our landscape. I think you'll enjoy it." I knew he had arrived in Boston that morning by steamer, and I now thought it high time to ask him. "Well, what do you think of America anyway?" I ought really to have asked him this the moment he stepped from the train.

"Oh," he said, "I'm intensely interested," and I perceived that he spoke with a certain reservation. "As the most advanced country of its time, I've always been very curious to see it."

The last sentence raised my dashed spirits again, and I said confidently, "You must find our system of baggage checks delightful." I said this because it is one of the first things we brag of to foreigners, and I had the habit of it. "By the way," I ventured to add, "I suppose you meant to say you brought two checks when I asked you for them at the train just now? But you really said you brought them."

"Yes," the Altrurian replied, "I gave half a dollar apiece for them at the station in Boston. I saw other

people doing it," he explained, noting my surprise. "Isn't it the custom?"

"I'm happy to say it isn't yet, on most of our roads. They were tipping the baggage man, to make sure that he checked their baggage in time, and put it on the train. I had to do that myself when I came up, otherwise it might have got along here sometime next day. But the system is perfect."

"The poor man looked quite worn out," said the Altrurian, "and I am glad I gave him something. He seemed to have several hundred pieces of baggage to look after, and he wasn't embarrassed like your porter by my helping him put my trunks into the car. May I confess that the meanness of the station, its insufficient facilities, its shabby waiting rooms, and its whole crowded and confused appearance gave me rather a bad impression?"

"I know," I had to own, "it's shameful, but you wouldn't have found another station in the city so bad."

"Ah, then," said the Altrurian, "I suppose this particular road is too poor to employ more baggage men, or build new stations, they seemed rather shabby all the way up."

"Well, no," I was obliged to confess, "it's one of the richest roads in the country. The stock stands at about 180. But I'm really afraid we shall be late to supper, if we don't get on," I broke off, though I was not altogether sorry to arrive after the porter had disposed of the baggage. I dreaded another display of active sympathy on the part of my strange companion, I have often felt sorry myself for the porters of hotels, but I have never thought of offering to help them handle the heavy trunks that they manage.

The Altrurian was delighted with the hotel, and in fact it did look extremely pretty with its branching piazzas full of well-dressed people, and its green lawns where the children were playing. I led the way to the room which I had taken for him. Next my own, it was simply furnished, but it was sweet with matting, fresh linen and pure white washed walls. I flung open the window blinds and let him get a glimpse of the mountains purpling under the sunset, the lake beneath, and the deeply foliaged shores.

"Glorious! Glorious!" he sighed.

"Yes," I modestly assented. "We think that's rather fine." He stood tranced before the window, and I thought I had better say, "Well, now I can't give you much time to get the dust of travel off, the

dining room doors close at eight, and we must hurry down."

"I'll be with you in a moment," he said, pulling off his coat

I waited impatiently at the foot of the stairs, avoiding the question I met on the lips and in the eyes of my acquaintance. The fame of my friend's behavior at the station must have spread through the whole place; and everybody wished to know who he was. I answered simply he was a traveler from Altruria, and in some cases I went farther and explained that the Altrurians were peculiar . . .

In much less time than it seemed my friend found me, and then I had a little compensation for my suffering in his behalf. I could see that, whatever people said of him, they felt the same mysterious liking at sight of him that I had felt. He had made a little change in his dress, and I perceived that the women thought him not only good-looking, but well-dressed. They followed him with their eyes as we went into the dining room, and I was rather proud of being with him, as if I somehow shared the credit of his clothes and good looks. The Altrurian himself seemed most struck with the head waiter, who showed us to our places, and while we were waiting for our supper I found a chance to explain that he was a divinity student from one of the fresh-water colleges, and was serving here during his summer vacation. This seemed to interest my friend so much that I went on to tell him that many of the wait-
resses, whom he saw standing there subject to the order of the guests, were country school mistresses in the winter.

"Ah, that is as it should be," he said; "that is the kind of thing I expected to meet with in America."

"Yes," I responded, in my flattered national vanity, "if America means anything at all it means the honor of work and the recognition of personal worth everywhere. I hope you are going to make a long stay with us. We like to have travellers visit us who can interpret the spirit of our institutions as well as read their letter. As a rule Europeans never quite get our point of view. Now a great many of these waitresses are ladies, in the true sense of the word; self-respectful, intelligent, refined, and fit to grace—"

I was interrupted by the noise my friend made in suddenly pushing back his chair and getting to his feet. "What's the matter?" I asked. "You're not ill, I hope?"

But he did not hear me. He had run half down the dining hall toward the slender young girl who was bringing us our supper. I had ordered rather generously, for my friend had owed to a good appetite, and I was hungry myself with waiting for him, so that the tray the girl carried was piled up with heavy dishes. To my dismay I saw, rather than heard at that distance, the Altrurian enter into a polite controversy with her, and then, as if overcoming all her scruples by sheer strength of will, possess himself of the tray and make off with it toward our table. The poor child followed him, blushing to her hair, the head waiter stood looking helplessly on, the guests, who at that late hour were fortunately few, were simply aghast at the scandal, the Altrurian alone seemed to think his conduct the most natural thing in the world. He put the tray on the side table near us, and in spite of our waitress's protests insisted upon arranging the little bird-bath dishes before our plates. Then at last he sat down, and the girl, flushed and tremulous, left the room, as I could not help suspecting, to have a good cry in the kitchen: She did not come back, and the head waiter, who was perhaps afraid to send another in her place, looked after our few wants himself. He kept a sharp eye on my friend, as if he were not quite sure he was safe, but the Altrurian resumed the conversation with all that lightness of spirits which I noticed in him after he helped the porter with the baggage. I did not think it the moment to take him to task for what he had just done, I was not even sure that it was the part of a host to do so at all, and between the one doubt and the other I left the burden of the talk to him.

"What a charming young creature!" he began. "I never saw anything prettier than the way she had of refusing my help, absolutely without coquetry or affectation of any kind. She is, as you said, a perfect lady, and she graces her work, as I am sure she would grace any exigency of life. She quite realizes my ideal of an American girl, and I see now what the spirit of your country must be from such an expression of it." I wished to tell him that while a country school teacher who waits at table in a summer hotel is very much to be respected in her sphere, she is not regarded with that high honor which some other women command among us, but I did not find this very easy, after what I had said of our esteem for labor; and while I was thinking how I could hedge, my friend went on. "I liked England greatly,

and I liked the English, but I could not like the theory of their civilization, or the aristocratic structure of their society. It seemed to me iniquitous, for we believe that inequality and iniquity are the same in the last analysis."

At this I found myself able to say "Yes, there is something terrible, something shocking in the frank brutality with which Englishmen affirm the essential inequality of men. The affirmation of the essential equality of men was the first point of departure with us, when we separated from them."

"I know," said the Altrurian. "How grandly it is expressed in your glorious Declaration."

"Ah, you have read our Declaration of Independence then?"

"Every Altrurian has read that," answered my friend.

"Well," I went on smoothly, and I hoped to render what I was going to say the means of enlightening him without offense concerning the little mistake he had just made with the waitress, "of course we don't take that in its closest literality."

"I don't understand you," he said.

"Why, you know it was rather the political than the social traditions of England that we broke with, in the revolution."

"How is that?" he returned. "Didn't you break with monarchy and nobility, and ranks and classes?"

"Yes, we broke with all those things."

"But I found them a part of the social as well as the political structure in England. You have no kings or nobles here. Have you any ranks or classes?"

"Well, not exactly in the English sense. Our ranks and classes, such as we have, are what I may call voluntary."

"Oh, I understand. I suppose that from time to time certain ones among you feel the need of serving, and ask leave of the commonwealth to subordinate themselves to the rest of the state, and perform all the lowlier offices in it. Such persons must be held in peculiar honor. Is it something like that?"

"Well, no, I can't say it's quite like that. In fact, I think I'd better let you trust to your own observation of our life."

"But I'm sure," said the Altrurian, with a simplicity so fine that it was a long time before I could believe it quite ical, "that I shall approach it so much more intelligently with a little instruction from you

You say that your social divisions are voluntary. But do I understand that those who serve among you do not wish to do so?"

"Well, I don't suppose they would serve if they could help it," I replied.

"Surely," said the Altrurian with a look of horror, "you don't mean that they are slaves?"

"Oh, no! Oh, no!" I said, "the War put an end to that. We are all free, now, black and white."

"But if they do not wish to serve, and are not held in peculiar honor for serving—"

"I see that my word 'voluntary' has misled you," I put in. "It isn't the word exactly. The divisions among us are rather a process of natural selection." "You will see, as you get better acquainted with the workings of our institutions, that there are no arbitrary distinctions here, but the fitness of the work for the man and the man for the work determines the social rank that each one holds."

"Ah, that is fine!" cried the Altrurian with a glow of enthusiasm. "Then I suppose that these intelligent young people who teach school in the winter and serve at table in the summer are in a sort of provisional state, waiting for the process of natural selection to determine whether they shall finally be teachers or waiters?"

"Yes, it might be stated in some such terms," I assented, though I was not altogether easy in my mind. It seemed to me that I was not quite candid with this most candid spirit. I added, "You know we are a sort of fatalists here in America. We are great believers in the doctrine that it will all come out right in the end."

"Ah, I don't wonder at that," said the Altrurian, "if the process of natural selection works so perfectly among you as you say. But I am afraid I don't understand this matter of your domestic service yet. I believe you said that all honest work is honored in America. Then no social slight attaches to service, I suppose?"

"Well, I can't say that, exactly. The fact is, a certain social slight does attach to service, and that is one reason why I don't quite like to have students wait at table. It won't be pleasant for them to remember it in after life, and it won't be pleasant for their children to remember it."

"Then the slight would descend?"

²² John Fiske had popularized in America the Darwinian theory of "natural selection."

"I think it would. One wouldn't like to think one's father or mother had been at service."

The Altrurian said nothing for a moment. Then he remarked, "So it seems that while all honest work is honored among you, there are some kinds of honest work that are not honored so much as others."

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because some occupations are more degrading than others."

"But why?" he persisted, as I thought a little unreasonably.

"Really," I said, "I think I must leave you to imagine."

"I am afraid I can't," he said sadly. "Then, if domestic service is degrading in your eyes, and people are not willingly servants among you, may I ask why any are servants?"

"It is a question of bread and butter. They are obliged to be."

"That is, they are forced to do work that is hateful and disgraceful to them because they cannot live without?"

"Excuse me," I said, not at all liking this sort of pursuit, and feeling it fair to turn even upon a guest who kept it up. "Isn't it so with you in Altruria?"

"It was so once," he admitted, "but not now. In fact, it is like a waking dream to find oneself in the presence of conditions here that we outlived so long ago."

There was an unconscious superiority in this speech that nettled me, and stung me to retort: "We do not expect to outlive them. We regard them as final, and as indestructibly based in human nature itself."

"Ah," said the Altrurian with a delicate and caressing courtesy, "have I said something offensive?"

"Not at all," I hastened to answer. "It is not surprising that you do not get our point of view exactly. You will, by and by, and then, I think, you will see that it is the true one. We have found that the logic of our convictions could not be applied to the problem of domestic service. It is everywhere a very curious and perplexing problem. The simple old solution of the problem was to own your servants; but we found that this was not consistent with the spirit of our free institutions. As soon as it was abandoned the anomaly began. We had outlived the

primitive period when the housekeeper worked with her domestics and they were her help and were called so and we had begun to have servants to do all the household work, and to call them so. This state of things never seemed right to some of our purest and best people. They fancied, as you seem to have done, that to compel people through their necessities to do your hateful drudgery, and to wound and shame them with a name which every American instinctively resents, was neither republican nor Christian. Some of our thinkers tried to mend matters by making their domestics a part of their families; and in the life of Emerson²³ you'll find an amusing account of his attempt to have his servant eat at the same table with himself and his wife. It wouldn't work. He and his wife could stand it, but the servant couldn't."

I paused, for this was where the laugh ought to have come in. The Altrurian did not laugh, he merely asked. "Why?"

"Well, because the servant knew, if they didn't, that they were a whole world apart in their traditions, and were no more fit to associate than New Englanders and New Zealanders. In the mere matter of education—"

"But I thought you said that these young girls who wait at table here were teachers."

"Oh, I beg your pardon; I ought to have explained. By this time it had become impossible, as it now is, to get American girls to take service except on some such unusual terms as we have in a summer hotel: and the domestics were already ignorant foreigners, fit for nothing else. In such a place as this it isn't so bad. It is more as if the girls worked in a shop or a factory. They command their own time, in a measure; their hours are tolerably fixed, and they have each other's society. In a private family they would be subject to order at all times, and they would have no social life. They would be in the family, but not of it. American girls understand this, and so they won't go out to service in the usual way. Even in a summer hotel the relation has its odious aspects. The system of giving fees seems to me degrading to those who have to take them. To offer a student or a teacher a dollar for personal service—it isn't right, or I can't make it so. In fact, the whole thing is rather anomalous with us. The best that you

²³ J. E. Cabot, *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. I, p. 446.

can say of it is that it works, and we don't know what else to do"

"But I don't see yet," said the Altrurian, "just why domestic service is degrading in a country where all kinds of work are honored"

"Well, my dear fellow, I have done my best to explain. As I intimated before, we distinguish, and in the different kinds of labor we distinguish against domestic service. I dare say it is partly because of the loss of independence which it involves. People naturally despise a dependent"

"Why?" asked the Altrurian with that innocence of his which I was beginning to find rather trying

"Why?" I retorted. "Because it implies weakness"

"And is weakness considered despicable among you?" he pursued

"In every community it is despised practically, if not theoretically," I tried to explain. "The great thing that America has done is to offer the race an opportunity—the opportunity for any man to rise above the rest, and to take the highest place, if he is able." I had always been proud of this fact, and I thought I had put it very well, but the Altrurian did not seem much impressed by it.

He said: "I do not see how it differs from any country of the past in that. But perhaps you mean that to rise carries with it an obligation to those below. 'If any is first among you, let him be your servant.'"²⁴ Is it something like that?"

"Well, it is not quite like that," I answered, remembering how very little our self-made men as a class had done for others. "Everyone is expected to look out for himself here. I fancy that there would be very little rising if men were expected to rise for the sake of others, in America. How is it with you in Altruria?" I demanded, hoping to get out of a certain discomfort I felt, in that way. "Do your risen men generally devote themselves to good of the community after they get to the top?"

"There is no rising among us," he said with what seemed a perception of the harsh spirit of my question, and he paused a moment before he asked in his turn, "How do men rise among you?"

"That would be rather a long story," I replied. "But putting it in the rough, I should say that they rose by their talents, their shrewdness, their ability to seize an advantage and turn it to their own account."

"And is that considered noble?"

²⁴ Cf. Mark ix 35

"It is considered smart. It is considered at the worst far better than a dead level of equality. Are all men equal in Altruria? Are they all alike gifted or beautiful, or short or tall?"

"No, they are only equal in duties and in rights. But, as you said just now, that is a very long story. Are they equal in nothing here?"

"They are equal in opportunities."

"Ah!" bated the Altrurian. "I am glad to hear that."

I began to feel a little uneasy, and I was not quite sure that this last assertion of mine would hold water. Everybody but ourselves had now left the dining room, and I saw the head waiter cying us impatiently. I pushed back my chair and said, "I'm sorry to seem to hurry you, but I should like to show you a very pretty sunset effect we have here before it is too dark. When we get back, I want to introduce you to a few of my friends. Of course I needn't tell you that there is a good deal of curiosity about you, especially among the ladies."

"Yes, I found that the case in England, largely. It was the women who cared most to meet me. I understand that in America society is managed even more by women than it is in England."

"It's entirely in their hands," I said with the satisfaction we all feel in the fact. "We have no other leisure class. The richest men among us are generally hard workers, devotion to business is the rule, but as soon as a man reaches the point where he can afford to pay for domestic service, his wife and daughters expect to be released from it to the cultivation of their minds and the enjoyment of social pleasures. It's quite right. That is what makes them so delightful to foreigners. You must have heard their praises chanted in England. The English find our men rather stupid, I believe, but they think our women are charming."

"Yes, I was told that the wives of their nobility were sometimes Americans," said the Altrurian. "The English think that you regard such marriages as a great honor, and that they are very gratifying to your national pride."

"Well, I suppose that is so in a measure," I confessed. "I imagine that it will not be long before the English aristocracy derives as largely from American millionaires as from kings' mistresses. Not," I added virtuously, "that we approve of aristocracy."

"No, I understand that," said the Altrurian. "I

shall hope to get your point of view in this matter more distinctly by and by. As yet, I'm a little vague about it."

"I think I can gradually make it clear to you," I returned.

II

We left the hotel, and I began to walk my friend across the meadow toward the lake. I wished him to see the reflection of the afterglow in its still waters, with the noble lines of the mountain range that ¹⁰ glassed itself there, the effect is one of the greatest charms of that lovely region, the sojourn of the sweetest summer in the world, and I am always impatient to show it to strangers.

We climbed the meadow wall and passed through a stretch of woods, to a path leading down to the shore, and as we loitered along in the tender gloom of the forest the music of the hermit-thrushes rang all round us, like crystal bells, like silver flutes, like the drip of fountains, like the chiming of still-eyed ²⁰ cherubim. We stopped from time to time and listened, while the shy birds sang unseen in their covert of shadows, but we did not speak till we emerged from the trees and suddenly stood upon the naked knoll overlooking the lake.

Then I explained, "The woods used to come down to the shore here, and we had their mystery and music to the water's edge, but last winter the owner cut the timber off. It looks rather ragged now." I had to recognize the fact, for I saw the Altrurian staring ³⁰ about him over the clearing, in a kind of horror. It was a squalid ruin, a graceless desolation, which not even the pitying twilight could soften. The stumps showed their hideous mutilation everywhere; the brush had been burned, and the fires had scorched and blackened the lean soil of the hill slope, and blasted it with sterility. A few weak saplings, withered by the flames, drooped and straggled about; it would be a century before the forces of nature could repair the waste.

"You say the owner did this," said the Altrurian. "Who is the owner?"

"Well, it does seem too bad," I answered evasively. "There has been a good deal of feeling about it. The neighbors tried to buy him off before he began the destruction, for they knew the value of the woods as an attraction to summer-boarders, the city cottagers, of course, wanted to save them, and together they offered for the land pretty nearly as much as

the timber was worth. But he had got it into his head that the land here by the lake would sell for building lots if it was cleared, and he could make money on that as well as on the trees, and so they had to go. Of course, one might say that he was deficient in public spirit, but I don't blame him, altogether."

"No," the Altrurian assented, somewhat to my surprise, I confess.

I resumed, "There was no one else to look after his interests, and it was not only his right but his duty, to get the most he could for himself and his own, according to his best light. That is what I tell people when they fall foul of him for his want of public spirit."

"The trouble seems to be, then, in the system that obliges each man to be the guardian of his own interests. Is that what you blame?"

"No, I consider it a very perfect system. It is based upon individuality, and we believe that individuality is the principle that differences civilized men from savages, from the lower animals, and makes us a nation instead of a tribe or a herd. There isn't one of us, no matter how much he censured this man's want of public spirit, but would resent the slightest interference with his property rights. The woods were his, he had the right to do what he pleased with his own."

"Do I understand you that, in America, a man may do what is wrong with his own?"

"He may do anything with his own."

"To the injury of others?"

"Well, not in person or property. But he may hurt them in taste and sentiment as much as he likes. Can't a man do what he pleases with his own in Altruria?"

"No, he can only do right with his own."

"And if he tries to do wrong, or what the community thinks is wrong?"

"Then the community takes his own from him." ⁴⁰ Before I could think of anything to say to this he went on: "But I wish you would explain to me why it was left to this man's neighbors to try and get him to sell his portion of the landscape?"

"Why, bless my soul!" I exclaimed, "who else was there? You wouldn't have expected to take up a collection among the summer-boarders?"

"That wouldn't have been so unreasonable; but I didn't mean that. Was there no provision for such an exigency in your laws? Wasn't the state empow-

ered to buy him off at the full value of his timber and his land?"

"Certainly not," I replied "That would be rank paternalism"

It began to get dark, and I suggested that we had better be going back to the hotel. The talk seemed already to have taken us away from all pleasure in the prospect, I said, as we found our way through the rich, balsam-scented twilight of the woods, where one joy haunted thrush was still singing, "You know that in America the law is careful not to meddle with a man's private affairs, and we don't attempt to legislate personal virtue"

"But marriage," he said, "surely you have the institution of marriage?"

I was really annoyed at this. I returned sarcastically, "Yes, I am glad to say that there we can meet your expectation, we have marriage, not only consecrated by the church, but established and defended by the state. What has that to do with the question?"

"And you consider marriage," he pursued, "the citadel of morality, the fountain of all that is pure and good in your private life, the source of home and the image of heaven?"

"There are some marriages," I said with a touch of our national humor, "that do not quite fill the bill, but that is certainly our ideal of marriage"

"Then why do you say that you have not legislated personal virtue in America?" he asked "You have laws, I believe, against theft and murder and slander and incest and perjury and drunkenness?"

"Why, certainly"

"Then it appears to me that you have legislated honesty, regard for human life, regard for character, abhorrence of unnatural vice, good faith and sobriety. I was told on the train coming up, by a gentleman who was shocked at the sight of a man beating his horse, that you even had laws against cruelty to animals"

"Yes, and I am happy to say that they are enforced to such a degree that a man cannot kill a cat cruelly without being punished for it." The Altrurian did not follow up his advantage, and I resolved not to be outdone in magnanimity. "Come, I will own that you have the best of me on those points. I must say you've trapped me very neatly, too, I can enjoy a thing of that kind when it's well done, and I frankly knock under. But I had in mind something altogether different when I spoke. I was thinking of those ideal-

ists who want to bind us hand and foot, and render us the slaves of a state where the most intimate relations of life shall be penetrated by legislation, and the very hearthstone shall be a tablet of laws"

"Isn't marriage a rather intimate relation of life?" asked the Altrurian. "And I understand that gentle man on the train to say that you had laws against cruelty to children and societies established to see them enforced. You don't consider such laws an invasion of the home, do you, or a violation of its immunities? I imagine," he went on "that the difference between your civilization and ours is only one of degree, after all, and that America and Altruria are really one at heart"

I thought his compliment a bit hyperbolic, but I saw that it was honestly meant, and as we Americans are first of all patriots, and vain for our country before we are vain for ourselves, I was not proof against the flattery it conveyed to me civically if not personally.

We were now drawing near the hotel, and I felt a certain glow of pleasure in its gay effect, on the pretty knoll where it stood. In its artless and accidental architecture it was not unlike one of our immense coastwise steamboats. The twilight had thickened to dusk, and the edifice was brilliantly lighted with electric lights, story above story, which streamed into the gloom around like the lights of saloon and stateroom. The corner of wood making into the meadow hid the station, there was no other building in sight, the hotel seemed riding at anchor on the swell of a placid sea. I was going to call the Altrurian's attention to this fanciful resemblance when I remembered that he had not been in our country long enough to have seen a Fall River²⁵ boat, and I made toward the house without wasting the comparison upon him. But I treasured it up in my own mind, intending some day to make a literary use of it.

The guests were sitting in friendly groups about the piazzas or in rows against the walls, the ladies with their gossip and the gentlemen with their cigars. The night had fallen cool after a hot day, and they all had the effect of having cast off care with the burden of the week that was past and to be steeping themselves in the innocent and simple enjoyment of the hour. They were mostly middle aged married folk, but some were old enough to have sons and daughters among the young people who went and came in

²⁵ Line operating between Boston and New York

a long, wandering promenade of the piazzas, or wove themselves through the waltz past the open windows of the great parlor, the music seemed one with the light that streamed far out on the lawn flanking the piazzas. Everyone was well dressed and comfortable and at peace, and I felt that our hotel was in some sort a microcosm of the republic.

We involuntarily paused, and I heard the Altrurian murmur, "Charming, charming! This is really delightful!"

"Yes, isn't it?" I returned, with a glow of pride. "Our hotel here is a type of the summer hotel everywhere, it's characteristic in not having anything characteristic about it, and I rather like the notion of the people in it being so much like the people in all the others that you would feel yourself at home wherever you met such a company in such a house. All over the country, north and south, wherever you find a group of hills or a pleasant bit of water or a stretch of coast, you'll find some such refuge as this for our weary toilers. We began to discover some time ago that it would not do to cut open the goose that laid our golden eggs, even if it looked like an eagle, and kept on perching on our banners just as if nothing had happened. We discovered that, if we continued to kill ourselves with hard work, there would be no Americans pretty soon."

The Altrurian laughed. "How delightfully you put it! How quaint! How picturesque! Excuse me, but I can't help expressing my pleasure in it. Our own humor is so very different."

"Ah," I said, "what is your humor like?"

"I could hardly tell you. I'm afraid; I've never been much of a humorist myself."

Again a cold doubt of something ironical in the man went through me, but I had no means of verifying it, and so I simply remained silent, waiting for him to prompt me if he wished to know anything further about our national transformation from bees perpetually busy into butterflies occasionally idle. "And when you had made that discovery?" he suggested.

"Why, we're nothing if not practical, you know, and as soon as we made that discovery we stopped killing ourselves and invented the summer resort. There are very few of our business or professional men, now, who don't take their four or five weeks' vacation. Their wives go off early in the summer, and if they go to some resort within three or four

hours of the city, the men leave town Saturday afternoon and run out, or come up, and spend Sunday with their families. For thirty-eight hours or so a hotel like this is a nest of happy homes."

"That is admirable," said the Altrurian. "You are truly a practical people. The ladies come early in the summer, you say?"

"Yes, sometimes in the beginning of June."

"What do they come for?" asked the Altrurian.

"What for? Why, for rest!" I retorted with some little temper.

"But I thought you told me awhile ago that as soon as a husband could afford it he relieved his wife and daughters from all household work."

"So he does."

"Then what do the ladies wish to rest from?"

"From care. It is not work alone that kills. They are not relieved from household care even when they are relieved from household work. There is nothing so killing as household care. Besides, the sex seems to be born tired. To be sure, there are some observers of our life who contend that with the advance of athletics among our ladies, with boating and bathing, and lawn-tennis and mountain climbing and freedom from care, and these long summers of repose, our women are likely to become as superior to the men physically as they now are intellectually. It is all right. We should like to see it happen. It would be part of the national joke."

"Oh, have you a national joke?" asked the Altrurian. "But, of course! You have so much humor. I wish you could give me some notion of it."

"Well, it is rather damaging to any joke to explain it," I replied, "and your only hope of getting at ours is to live into it. One feature of it is the confusion of foreigners at the sight of our men's willingness to subordinate themselves to our women."

"Oh, I don't find that very bewildering," said the Altrurian. "It seems to me a generous and manly trait of the American character. I'm proud to say that it is one of the points at which your civilization and our own touch. There can be no doubt that the influence of women in your public affairs must be of the greatest advantage to you, it has been so with us."

I turned and stared at him, but he remained insensible to my astonishment, perhaps because it was now too dark for him to see it. "Our women have no influence in public affairs," I said quietly, after a moment.

"They haven't? Is it possible? But didn't I understand you to imply just now that your women were better educated than your men?"

"Well, I suppose that, taking all sorts and conditions among us, the women are as a rule better schooled, if not better educated."

"Then, apart from the schooling, they are not more cultivated?"

"In a sense you might say they were. They certainly go in for a lot of things—art and music, and Browning and the drama, and foreign travel and psychology, and political economy and heaven knows what all. They have more leisure for it, they have all the leisure there is, in fact, our young men have to go into business. I suppose you may say our women are more cultivated than our men, yes, I think there's no questioning that. They are the great readers among us. We poor devils of authors would be badly off if it were not for our women. In fact, no author could make a reputation among us without them. American literature exists because American women appreciate it and love it."

"But surely your men read books?"

"Some of them, not many, comparatively. You will often hear a complacent ass of a husband and father say to an author, 'My wife and daughters know your books, but I can't find time for anything but the papers nowadays. I skim them over at breakfast, or when I'm going in to business on the train.' He isn't the least ashamed to say that he reads nothing but the newspapers."

"Then you think that it would be better for him to read books?"

"Well, in the presence of four or five thousand journalists with drawn scalping knives I should not like to say so. Besides, modesty forbids."

"No, but really," the Altrurian persisted, "you think that the literature of a book is more carefully pondered than the literature of a daily newspaper?"

"I suppose even the four or five thousand journalists with drawn scalping knives would hardly deny that."

"And it stands to reason, doesn't it, that the habitual reader of carefully pondered literature ought to be more thoughtful than the readers of literature which is not carefully pondered, and which they merely skim over on their way to business?"

"I believe we began by assuming the superior cul-

ture of our women, didn't we? You'll hardly find an American that isn't proud of it."

"Then," said the Altrurian, "if your women are generally better schooled than your men, and more cultivated and more thoughtful, and are relieved of household work in such great measure and even of domestic cares, why have they no part in your public affairs?"

I laughed, for I thought I had my friend at last. "For the best of all possible reasons, they don't want it."

"Ah, that's no reason," he returned. "Why don't they want it?"

"Really," I said, out of all patience, "I think I must let you ask the ladies themselves," and I turned and moved again toward the hotel, but the Altrurian gently detained me.

"Excuse me," he began.

"No, no," I said.

"The feast is set, the guests are met,
May'st hear the merry din,"²⁶

Come in and see the young people dance!"

"Wait," he entreated, "tell me a little more about the old people first. This digression about the ladies has been very interesting, but I thought you were going to speak of the men here. Who are they, or rather, what are they?"

"Why, as I said before, they are all business men and professional men, people who spend their lives in studies and counting rooms and offices, and have come up here for a few weeks or a few days of well-earned repose. They are of all kinds of occupations—they are lawyers and doctors and clergymen and merchants and brokers and bankers. There's hardly any calling you won't find represented among them. As I was thinking just now, our hotel is a sort of microcosm of the American republic."

"I am most fortunate in finding you here, where I can avail myself of your intelligence in making my observations of your life under such advantageous circumstances. It seems to me that with your help I might penetrate the fact of American life, possess myself of the mystery of your national joke, without stirring beyond the piazza of your hospitable hotel," said my friend. I doubted it, but one does not lightly

²⁶ Coleridge, *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, line, 7-8.

"The guests are met, the feast is set,
May'st hear the merry din."

put aside a compliment like that to one's intelligence, and I said I should be very happy to be of use to him. He thanked me and said, "Then, to begin with, I understand that these gentlemen are here because they are all overworked."

"Of course. You can have no conception of how hard our business men and our professional men work. I suppose there is nothing like it anywhere else in the world. But, as I said before, we are beginning to find that we cannot burn the candle at both ends¹⁰ and have it last long. So we put one end out for a little while every summer. Still, there are frightful wrecks of men strewn all along the course of our prosperity, wrecks of mind and body. Our insane asylums are full of madmen who have broken under the tremendous strain, and every country in Europe abounds in our dyspeptics." I was rather proud of this terrible fact, there is no doubt but we Americans are proud of overworking ourselves; heaven knows why.

The Altrurian murmured, "Awful! Shocking!" but I thought somehow he had not really followed me very attentively in my celebration of our national violation of the laws of life and its consequences. "I am glad," he went on, "that your business men and professional men are beginning to realize the folly and wickedness of overwork. Shall I find some of your other weary workers here, too?"

"What other weary workers?" I asked in turn, for I imagined I had gone over pretty much the whole³⁰ list.

"Why," said the Altrurian, "your mechanics and day laborers, your iron moulders and glass blowers, your miners and farmers, your printers and mill operatives, your trainmen and quarry hands. Or do they prefer to go to resorts of their own?"

III

It was not easy to make sure of such innocence as prompted this inquiry of my Altrurian friend. The⁴⁰ doubt whether he could really be in earnest was something that I had already felt, and it was destined to beset me, as it did now, again and again. My first thought was that of course he was trying a bit of cheap irony on me, a mixture of the feeble sarcasm and false sentiment that makes us smile when we find it in the philippics of the industrial agitators. For a moment I did not know but I had fallen

victim to a walking-delegate²⁷ on his vacation, who was employing his summer leisure in going about the country in the guise of a traveler from Altruria, and foisting himself upon people who would have had nothing to do with him in his real character. But in another moment I perceived that this was impossible. I could not suppose that the friend who had introduced him to me would be capable of seconding so poor a joke, and besides I could not imagine why a walking-delegate should wish to address his clumsy satire to me particularly. For the present, at least, there was nothing for it but to deal with this inquiry as if it were made in good faith, and in the pursuit of useful information. It struck me as grotesque, but it would not have been decent to treat it as if it were so. I was obliged to regard it seriously, and so I decided to shirk it.

"Well," I said, "that opens up rather a large field, which lies somewhat outside of the province of my²⁰ own activities. You know, I am a writer of romantic fiction, and my time is so fully occupied in manipulating the destinies of the good old-fashioned hero and heroine, and trying always to make them end in a happy marriage, that I have hardly had a chance to look much into the lives of agriculturists or artisans; and to tell you the truth I don't know what they do with their leisure. I'm pretty certain, though, you won't meet any of them in this hotel, they couldn't afford it, and I fancy they would find themselves out of their element among our guests. We respect them thoroughly, every American does; and we know that the prosperity of the country rests with them; we have a theory that they are politically sovereign, but we see very little of them, and we don't associate with them. In fact, our cultivated people have so little interest in them socially that they don't like to meet them, even in fiction; they prefer refined and polished ladies and gentlemen, whom they can have some sympathy with; and I always go to the upper³⁰ classes for my types. It won't do to suppose, though, that we are indifferent to the working-classes in their place. Their condition is being studied a good deal just now, and there are several persons here who will

²⁷ As defined in Bulletin No. 25, *Labor Terminology* (published by Bureau of Business Research, Harvard University, 1921): "A representative of a labor union whose duty is to collect dues from members, to secure the proper enforcement of union rules, to solicit membership, and to organize local branches."

be able to satisfy your curiosity on the points you have made. I think I will introduce you to them."

The Altrurian did not try to detain me this time. He said he should be very glad indeed to meet my friends, and I led the way toward a little group at the corner of the piazza. They were men whom I particularly liked, for one reason or another, they were intelligent and open-minded and they were thoroughly American. One was a banker, another was a minister, there was a lawyer, and there was a doctor, there was a professor of political economy in one of our colleges and there was a retired manufacturer—I do not know what he used to manufacture: cotton or iron, or something like that. They all rose politely as I came up with my Altrurian, and I fancied in them a sensation of expectancy created by the rumor of his eccentric behavior which must have spread through the hotel. But they controlled this if they had it, and I could see as the light fell upon his face from a spray of electric lights on the nearest pillar, that sort of liking kindle in theirs which I had felt myself at first sight of him.

I said, "Gentlemen, I wish to introduce my friend, Mr. Homos," and then I presented them severally to him by name. We all sat down, and I explained "Mr. Homos is from Altruria. He is visiting our country for the first time, and is greatly interested in the working of our institutions. He has been asking me some rather hard questions about certain phases of our civilization, and the fact is that I have launched upon you because I don't feel quite able to cope with him."

They all laughed again, not so civilly, I felt, and the professor asked, with a sarcasm that I thought hardly merited, "What point in our polity can be obscured to the author of 'Glove and Gauntlet' and 'Airs and Graces'?"

They all laughed again, not so civilly, I felt, and then the banker asked my friend, "Is it long since you left Altruria?"

"It seems a great while ago," the Altrurian answered, "but it is really only a few weeks."

"You came by way of England, I suppose?"

"Yes, there is no direct line to America," said the Altrurian.

"That seems rather odd," I ventured, with some patronizing grudge.

"Oh, the English have direct lines everywhere," the banker instructed me.

"The tariff has killed our shipbuilding," said the professor. No one took up this firebrand, and the professor added, "Your name is Greek, isn't it, Mr. Homos?"

"Yes, we are of one of the early Hellenic families," said the Altrurian.

"And do you think," asked the lawyer, who, like most lawyers, was a lover of romance and was well read in legendary lore especially, "that there is any reason for supposing that Altruria is identical with the fabled Atlantis?"²⁸

"No, I can't say that I do. We have no traditions of a submergence of the continent, and there are only the usual evidences of a glacial epoch which you find everywhere, to support such a theory. Besides, our civilization is strictly Christian and dates back to no earlier period than that of the first Christian commune after Christ.²⁹ It is a matter of history with us that one of these communists, when they were dispersed, brought the gospel to our continent, he was cast away on our eastern coast on his way to Britain."

"Yes, we know that," the minister intervened, "but it is perfectly astonishing that an island so large as Altruria should have been lost to the knowledge of the rest of the world ever since the beginning of our era. You would hardly think that there was a space of the ocean's surface a mile square which had not been traversed by a thousand keels since Columbus sailed westward."

"No, you wouldn't. And I wish," the doctor suggested in his turn, "that Mr. Homos would tell us something about his country, instead of asking us about ours."

"Yes," I coincided, "I'm sure we should all find it a good deal easier. At least I should, but I brought our friend up in the hope that the professor would like nothing better than to train a battery of hard facts upon a defenseless stranger." Since the professor had given me that little stab, I was rather anxious to see how he would handle the desire for information in the Altrurian which I had found so prickly.

This turned the laugh on the professor, and he pretended to be as curious about Altruria as the rest, and said he would rather hear of it. But the Altrurian said "I hope you will excuse me. Sometime I shall be glad to talk of Altruria as long as you like, or if

²⁸ The "lost continent"—thought to have disappeared somewhere into the Atlantic Ocean.

²⁹ Cf. Acts 1:34-35.

you will come to us, I shall be still happier to show you many things that I couldn't make you understand at a distance. But I am in America to learn, not to teach, and I hope you will have patience with my ignorance. I begin to be afraid that it is so great as to seem a little incredible. I have fancied in my friend here," he went on, with a smile toward me, "a suspicion that I was not entirely single in some of the inquiries I have made, but that I had some ulterior motive, some wish to censure or satirize."

"Oh, not at all!" I protested, for it was not polite to admit a conjecture so accurate. "We are so well satisfied with our condition that we have nothing but pity for the darkened mind of the foreigner, though we believe in it fully. We are used to the English tourist."

My friends laughed, and the Altrurian continued. "I am very glad to hear it, for I feel myself at a peculiar disadvantage among you. I am not only a foreigner, but I am so alien to you in all the traditions and habitudes that I find it very difficult to get upon common ground with you. Of course I know theoretically what you are, but to realize it practically is another thing. I had read so much about America and understood so little that I could not rest without coming to see for myself. Some of the apparent contradictions were so colossal"—

"We have everything on a large scale here," said the banker, breaking off the ash of his cigar with the end of his little finger, "and we rather pride ourselves on the size of our inconsistencies, even. I know something of the state of things in Altruria, and, to be frank with you, I will say that it seems to me preposterous. I should say it was impossible, if it were not an accomplished fact; but I always feel bound to recognize the thing done. You have hitched your wagon to a star³⁰ and you have made the star go, there is never any trouble with wagons, but stars are not easily broken to harness, and you have managed to get yours well in hand. As I said, I don't believe in you, but I respect you." I thought this charming, myself, perhaps because it stated my own mind about Altruria so exactly and in terms so just and generous.

"Pretty good," said the doctor, in a murmur of satisfaction, at my ear, "for a bloated bondholder."

"Yes," I whispered back, "I wish I had said it."

³⁰ "Hitch your wagon to a star," Emerson in *"Civilization, Society and Solitude."*

What an American way of putting it! Emerson would have liked it himself. After all *he* was our prophet."

"He must have thought so from the way we kept stoning him," said the doctor, with a soft laugh.

"Which of our contradictions," asked the banker, in the same tone of gentle bonhomie, "has given you and our friend pause, just now?"

The Altrurian answered after a moment: "I am not sure that it is a contradiction, for as yet I have not ascertained the facts I was seeking. Our friend was telling me of the great change that had taken place in regard to work, and the increased leisure that your professional people are now allowing themselves, and I was asking him where your workingmen spent their leisure."

He went over the list of those he had specified, and I hung my head in shame and pity; it really had such an effect of mawkish sentimentality. But my friends received it in the best possible way. They did not laugh; they heard him out, and then they quietly deferred to the banker, who made answer for us all.

"Well, I can be almost as brief as the historian of Iceland in his chapter on snakes: 'those people have no leisure to spend'."

"Except when they go out on a strike," said the manufacturer, with a certain grim humor of his own. I never heard anything more dramatic than the account he once gave of the way he broke up a labor-union. "I have seen a good many of them at leisure then."

"Yes," the doctor chimed in, "and in my younger days, when I necessarily had a good deal of charity-practice, I used to find them at leisure when they were 'laid off.' It always struck me as such a pretty euphemism. It seemed to minimize the harm of the thing so. It seemed to take all the hunger and cold and sickness out of the fact. To be simply 'laid off' was so different from losing your work and having to face beggary or starvation!"

"Those people," said the professor, "never put anything by. They are wasteful and improvident, almost to a man, and they learn nothing by experience, though they know as well as we do that it is simply a question of demand and supply, and that the day of overproduction is sure to come, when their work must stop unless the men that give them work are willing to lose money."

"And I've seen them lose it, sometimes, rather

³¹ Neil Horrebain, *Natural History of Norway*, Chapter LXXII.

than shut down," the manufacturer remarked, "lose it hand over hand, to keep the men at work, and then as soon as the tide turned the men would strike for higher wages. You have no idea of the ingratitude of those people." He said this towards the minister, as if he did not wish to be thought hard, and in fact he was a very kindly man.

"Yes," replied the minister "that is one of the most sinister features of the situation. They seem really to regard their employers as their enemies. I don't know how it will end."

"I know how it would end if I had my way," said the professor. "There wouldn't be any labor unions, and there wouldn't be any strikes."

"That is all very well," said the lawyer, from that judicial mind which I always liked in him, "as far as the strikes are concerned, but I don't understand that the abolition of the unions would affect the impersonal process of laying off. The law of demand and supply I respect as much as any one—it's something like the constitution, but all the same I should object extremely to have my income stopped by it every now and then. I'm probably not so wasteful as a workingman generally is, still I haven't laid by enough to make it a matter of indifference to me whether my income went on or not. Perhaps the professor has." The professor did not say, and we all took leave to laugh. The lawyer concluded, "I don't see how those fellows stand it."

"They don't, all of them," said the doctor. "Or their wives and children don't. Some of them die."

"I wonder," the lawyer pursued "what has become of the good old American fact that there is always work for those who are willing to work? I notice that wherever five thousand men strike in the forenoon, there are five thousand men to take their places in the afternoon—and not men who are turning their hands to something new, but men who are used to doing the very thing the strikers have done."

"That is one of the things that teach the futility of strikes," the professor made haste to interpose, as if he had not quite liked to appear averse to the interests of the workman, no one likes to do that. "If there were anything at all to be hoped from them it would be another matter."

"Yes, but that isn't the point, quite," said the lawyer.

"By the way, what is the point?" I asked, with my humorous lightness.

What I supposed," said the banker, "it was the question how the working classes amused their elegant leisure. But it seems to be almost anything else."

We all applauded the neat touch, but the Altrurian cagily entreated: "No, no! never mind that, now. That is a matter of comparatively little interest. I would so much rather know something about the status of the workingman among you."

"Do you mean his political status? It's that of every other citizen."

"I don't mean that. I suppose that in America you have learned, as we have in Altruria, that equal political rights are only means to an end, and as an end have no value or reality. I meant the economic status of the workingman and his social status."

I do not know why we were so long girding up our loins to meet this simple question. I myself could not have hopefully undertaken to answer it, but the others were each in their way men of affairs, and practically acquainted with the facts, except perhaps the professor, but he had devoted a great deal of thought to them, and ought to have been qualified to make some sort of response. But even he was silent, and I had a vague feeling that they were all somehow reluctant to formulate their knowledge as if it were uncomfortable or discreditable. The banker continued to smoke quietly on for a moment, then he suddenly threw his cigar away.

"I like to free my mind of cant," he said, with a short laugh, "when I can afford it, and I propose to cast all sorts of American cant out of it, in answering your question. The economic status of the workingman among us is essentially the same as that of the workingman all over the civilized world. You will find plenty of people here, especially about election time, to tell you differently, but they will not be telling you the truth, though a great many of them think they are. In fact, I suppose most Americans honestly believe because we have a republican form of government, and manhood-suffrage and so on, that our economic conditions are peculiar and that our workingman has a status higher and better than that of the workingman anywhere else. But he has nothing of the kind. His circumstances are better, and provisionally his wages are higher, but it is only a question of years or decades when his circumstances will be the same and his wages the same as the European workman's. There is nothing in our conditions to prevent this."

"Yes, I understood from our friend here," said the Altrurian, nodding toward me, "that you had broken only with the political tradition of Europe in your revolution, and he has explained to me that you do not hold all kinds of labor in equal esteem, but"—

"What kind of labor did he say we did hold in esteem?" asked the banker.

"Why, I understood him to say that if America meant anything at all it meant the honor of work, but that you distinguished and did not honor some kinds of work so much as others—for instance, domestic service, or personal attendance of any kind."

The banker laughed again. "Oh, he drew the line there, did he? Well, we all have to draw the line somewhere. Our friend is a novelist, and I will tell you in strict confidence that the line he has drawn is imaginary. We don't honor any kind of work any more than any other people. If a fellow gets up, the papers make a great ado over his having been a wood-chopper, or a bobbin-boy, or something of that kind, but I doubt if the fellow himself likes it, he doesn't if he's got any sense. The rest of us feel that it's *infra dig*,³² and hope nobody will find out that we ever worked with our hands for a living. I'll go farther," said the banker, with the effect of whistling prudence down the wind, "and I will challenge any of you to gainsay me from his own experience or observation. How does esteem usually express itself? When we wish to honor a man, what do we do?"

"Ask him to dinner," said the lawyer.

"Exactly. We offer him some sort of social recognition. Well, as soon as a fellow gets up, if he gets up high enough, we offer him some sort of social recognition, in fact, all sorts, but upon condition that he has left off working with his hands for a living. We forgive all you please to his past on account of the present. But there isn't a workingman I venture to say, in any city, or town, or even large village, in the whole length and breadth of the United States who has any social recognition, if he is still working at his trade. I don't mean, merely, that he is excluded from rich and fashionable society, but from the society of the average educated and cultivated people. I'm not saying he is fit for it; but I don't care how intelligent and agreeable he might be—and some of them are astonishingly intelligent, and so agreeable in their tone of mind, and their original way of looking at things, that I like nothing

³² *infra dignitatem*, beneath one's dignity.

better than to talk with them—all of our invisible fences are up against him."

The minister said, "I wonder if that sort of exclusiveness is quite natural? Children seem to feel no sort of social difference among themselves."

"We can hardly go to children for a type of social order," the professor suggested.

"True," the minister meekly admitted. "But somehow there is a protest in us somewhere against these arbitrary distinctions, something that questions whether they are altogether right. We know that they must be, and always have been, and always will be, and yet—well, I will confess it—I never feel at peace when I face them."

"Oh," said the banker, "if you come to the question of right and wrong, that is another matter. I don't say it's right. I'm not discussing that question; though I'm certainly not proposing to level the fences; I should be the last to take my own down. I say simply that you are no more likely to meet a workingman in American society than you are to meet a colored man. Now you can judge," he ended, turning directly to the Altrurian, "how much we honor labor. And I hope I have indirectly satisfied your curiosity as to the social status of the workingman among us."

We were all silent. Perhaps the others were occupied like myself in trying to recall some instance of a workingman whom they had met in society, and perhaps we said nothing because we all failed.

The Altrurian spoke at last.

"You have been so very full and explicit that I feel as if it were almost unseemly to press any further inquiry; but I should very much like to know how your workmen bear this social exclusion."

"I'm sure I can't say," returned the banker. "A man does not care much to get into society until he has something to eat, and how to get that is always the first question with the workingman."

"But you wouldn't like it yourself?"

"No, certainly. I shouldn't like it myself. I shouldn't complain of not being asked to people's houses, and the workmen don't, you can't do that; but I should feel it an incalculable loss. We may laugh at the emptiness of society, or pretend to be sick of it, but there is no doubt that society is the flower of civilization, and to be shut out from it is to be denied the best privilege of a civilized man. There are society-women—we have all met them—

whose graciousness and refinement of presence are something of incomparable value, it is more than a liberal education to have been admitted to it, but it is as inaccessible to the workingman as—what shall I say? The thing is too grotesquely impossible for any sort of comparison. Merely to conceive of its possibility is something that passes a joke, it is a kind of offence."

Again we were silent.

"I don't know," the banker continued, "how the notion of our social equality originated, but I think it has been fostered mainly by the expectation of foreigners, who argued it from our political equality. As a matter of fact, it never existed, except in our poorest and most primitive communities, in the pioneer days of the West, and among the gold hunters of California. It was not dreamt of in our colonial society, either in Virginia, or Pennsylvania, or New York, or Massachusetts, and the fathers of the republic who were mostly slaveholders, were practically as stiff-necked aristocrats as any people of their day. We have not a political aristocracy, that is all, but there is as absolute a division between the orders of men, and as little love, in this country as in any country on the globe. The severance of the man who works for his living with his hands from the man who does not work for his living with his hands is so complete, and apparently so final, that nobody even imagines anything else, not even in fiction. Or, how is that?" he asked, turning to me. "Do you fellows still put the intelligent, high-spirited, handsome young artisan, who wins the millionaire's daughter into your books? I used sometimes to find him there."

"You might still find him in the fiction of the weekly story papers, but," I was obliged to own, "he would not go down with my readers. Even in the story-paper fiction he would leave off working as soon as he married the millionaire's daughter, and go to Europe, or he would stay here and become a social leader, but he would not receive workingmen in his gilded halls."

The others rewarded my humor with a smile, but the banker said, "Then I wonder you were not ashamed of filling our friend up with that stuff about our honoring some kinds of labor. It is true that we don't go about openly and explicitly despising any kind of honest toil—people don't do that anywhere, now, but we condemn it in terms quite as unmistakable. The workingman acquiesces as completely

as anybody else. He does not remain a workingman a moment longer than he can help, and after he gets up, if he is weak enough to be proud of having been one, it is because he feels that his low origin is a proof of his prowess in rising to the top against unusual odds. I don't suppose there is a man in the whole civilized world—outside of Altruria, of course—who is proud of working at a trade, except the shoemaker Tolstoy,³³ and he is a count, and he does not make very good shoes."

We all laughed again. Those shoes of Count Tolstoy's are always such an infallible joke. The Altrurian, however, was cocked and primed with another question, he instantly exploded it. "But are all the workingmen in America eager to rise above their condition? Is there none willing to remain among the mass because the rest could not rise with him, and from the hope of yet bringing labor to honor?"

The banker answered, "I never heard of any. No, the American ideal is not to change the conditions for all, but for each to rise above the rest if he can."

"Do you think it is really so bad as that?" asked the minister timidly.

The banker answered, "Bad? Do you call that bad? I thought it was very good. But good or bad, I don't think you'll find it deniable, if you look into the facts. There may be workingmen willing to remain so for other workingmen's sake, but I have never met any—perhaps because the workingman never goes into society."

The unfailing question of the Altrurian broke the silence which ensued. "Are there many of your workingmen who are intelligent and agreeable—of the type you mentioned a moment since?"

"Perhaps," said the banker, "I had better refer you to one of our friends here, who has had a great deal more to do with them than I have. He is a manufacturer and he has had to do with all kinds of work-people."

"Yes, for my sins," the manufacturer assented, and he added, "They are often confoundedly intelligent, though I haven't often found them very agreeable, either in their tone of mind or their original way of looking at things."

The banker amiably acknowledged his thrust, and

³³ Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy (1828-1910), Russian count, novelist, and social reformer. Howells was himself greatly influenced by Tolstoy, especially in his social thinking.

the Altrurian asked, "Ah, they are opposed to your own?"

"Well, we have the same trouble here that you must have heard of in England. As you know now that the conditions are the same here, you won't be surprised at the fact."

"But the conditions," the Altrurian pursued; "do you expect them always to continue the same?"

"Well, I don't know," said the manufacturer. "We can't expect them to change themselves, and I 10 shouldn't know how to change them. It was expected that the rise of the trusts and the syndicates would break the unions, but somehow they haven't. The situation remains the same. The unions are not cutting one another's throat, now, any more than we are. The war is on a larger scale—that's all."

"Then let me see," said the Altrurian, "whether I clearly understand the situation, as regards the workingman in America. He is dependent upon the employer for his chance to earn a living, and he is never 20 sure of this. He may be thrown out of work by his employer's disfavor or disaster, and his willingness to work goes for nothing, there is no public provision of work for him, there is nothing to keep him from want, nor the prospect of anything."

"We are all in the same boat," said the professor.

"But some of us have provisioned ourselves rather better and can generally weather it through till we are picked up," the lawyer put in.

"I am always saying the workingman is improvi- 30 dent," returned the professor.

"There are the charities," the minister suggested.

"But his economical status," the Altrurian pursued, "is in a state of perpetual uncertainty, and to save himself in some measure he has organized, and so has constituted himself a danger to the public peace?"

"A very great danger," said the professor.

"I guess we can manage him," the manufacturer remarked.

"And socially he is non-existent?"

The Altrurian turned with this question to the banker, who said, "He is certainly not in society."

"Then," said my guest, "if the workingmen's wages are provisionally so much better here than in Europe, why should they be discontented? What is the real cause of their discontent?"

I have always been suspicious, in the company of practical men, of an atmosphere of condescension to

men of my calling, if nothing worse. I fancy they commonly regard artists of all kinds as a sort of harmless eccentrics, and that literary people they look upon as something droll, as weak and soft, as not quite right. I believe that this particular group, indeed, was rather abler to conceive of me as a rational person than most others, but I knew that if even they had expected me to be as reasonable as themselves they would not have been greatly disappointed 10 if I were not, and it seemed to me that I had put myself wrong with them in imparting to the Altrurian that romantic impression that we hold labor in honor here. I had really thought so, but I could not say so now, and I wished to retrieve myself somehow. I wished to show that I was a practical man, too, and so I made answer: "What is the cause of the workingman's discontent? It is very simple—the walking-delegate."

IV

I suppose I could not have fairly claimed any great originality for my notion that the walking-delegate was the cause of the labor troubles: he is regularly assigned as the reason of a strike in the newspapers, and is reprobated for his evil agency by the editors, who do not fail to read the workingmen many solemn lessons, and fervently warn them against him, as soon as the strike begins to go wrong—as it nearly always does. I understand from them that the walking-delegate is an irresponsible tyrant, who emerges from the mystery that habitually hides him and from time to time orders a strike in mere rancor of spirit and plenitude of power, and then leaves the workingmen and their families to suffer the consequences, while he goes off somewhere and rolls in the lap of luxury, careless of the misery he has created. Between his debauches of vicious idleness and his accesses of baleful activity he is employed in poisoning the mind of the workingman against his 40 real interests and real friends. This is perfectly easy, because the American workingman, though singularly shrewd and sensible in other respects, is the victim of an unaccountable obliquity of vision which keeps him from seeing his real interests and real friends—or at least from knowing them when he sees them.

There could be no doubt, I thought, in the mind of any reasonable person that the walking-delegate was the source of the discontent among our pro-

letariat, and I alleged him with a confidence which met the approval of the professor, apparently for he nodded, as if to say that I had hit the nail on the head this time and the minister seemed to be freshly impressed with a notion that could not be new to him. The lawyer and the doctor were silent as if waiting for the banker to speak again, but he was silent, too. The manufacturer, to my chagrin, broke into a laugh. "I'm afraid," he said, with a sardonic levity which surprised me, "you'll have to go a good deal deeper than the walking delegate. He's a symptom, he isn't the disease. The thing keeps on and on, and it seems to be always about wages, but it isn't about wages at the bottom. Some of those fellows know it and some of them don't, but the real discontent is with the whole system, with the nature of things. I had a curious revelation on that point the last time I tried to deal with my men as a union. They were always bothering me about this and about that, and there was no end to the bickering. I yielded point after point, but it didn't make any difference. It seemed as if the more I gave the more they asked. At last I made up my mind to try to get at the real inwardness of the matter, and I didn't wait for their committee to come to me—I sent for their leading man, and said I wanted to have it out with him. He wasn't a bad fellow, and when I got at him, man to man that way, I found he had sense, and he had ideas—it's no use pretending those fellows are fools, he had thought about his side of the question, any way. I said 'Now what does it all mean? Do you want the earth, or don't you? When is it going to end?' I offered him something to take, but he said he didn't drink, and we compromised on cigars. 'Now when is it going to end?' said I, and I pressed it home, and wouldn't let him fight off from the point. 'Do you mean when it is all going to end?' said he. 'Yes,' said I, 'all I'm sick of it. If there's any way out I'd like to know it.' 'Well,' said he, 'I'll tell you, if you want to know. It's all going to end when you get the same amount of money for the same amount of work as we do.'"

We all laughed uproariously. The thing was deliciously comical, and nothing, I thought, attested the Altrurian's want of humor like his failure to appreciate this joke. He did not even smile in asking, "And what did you say?"

"Well," returned the manufacturer, with cosy enjoyment, "I asked him if the men would take the

concern and run it themselves." We laughed again; this seemed even better than the other joke. "But he said 'No,' they would not like to do that. And then I asked him just what they would like, if they could have their own way, and he said they would like to have men run the business, and all share alike. I asked him what was the sense of that, and why if I could do something that all of them put together couldn't do I shouldn't be paid more than all of them put together, and he said that if a man did his best he ought to be paid as much as the best man. I asked him if that was the principle their union was founded on, and he said 'Yes,' that the very meaning of their union was the protection of the weak by the strong, and the equalization of earnings among all who do their best."

We waited for the manufacturer to go on, but he made a dramatic pause at this point, as if to let it sink into our minds, and he did not speak until the Altrurian prompted him with the question, "And what did you finally do?"

"I saw there was only one way out for me, and I told the fellow I did not think I could do business on that principle. We parted friends but the next Saturday I locked them out, and smashed their union. They came back, most of them—they had to—but I've treated with them ever since 'as individuals.'"

"And they're much better off in your hands than they were in the union," said the professor.

"I don't know about that," said the manufacturer, "but I'm sure I am."

We laughed with him, all but the minister, whose mind seemed to have caught upon some other point, and who sat absently by.

"And is it your opinion, from what you know of the workmen generally, that they all have this twist in their heads?" the professor asked.

"They have until they begin to rise. Then they get rid of it mighty soon. Let a man save something—enough to get a house of his own, and take a boarder or two, and perhaps have a little money at interest—and he sees the matter in another light."

"Do you think he sees it more clearly?" asked the minister.

"He sees it differently."

"What do you think?" the minister pursued, turning to the lawyer. "You are used to dealing with questions of justice"—

"Rather more with questions of law. I'm afraid," the other returned pleasantly, putting his feet together before him and looking down at them, in a way he had "But still, I have a great interest in questions of justice, and I confess that I find a certain wild equity in this principle, which I see nobody could do business on. It strikes me as idyllic—it's a touch of real poetry in the rough-and-tumble prose of our economic life."

He referred this to me as something I might appreciate in my quality of literary man, and I responded in my quality of practical man, "There's certainly more rhyme than reason in it."

He turned again to the minister.

"I suppose the ideal of the Christian state is the family?"

"I hope so," said the minister, with the gratitude that I have seen people of his cloth show when men of the world conceded premises which the world usually contests, it has seemed to me pathetic.

"And if that is the case, why the logic of the postulate is that the prosperity of the weakest is the sacred charge and highest happiness of all the stronger. But the law has not recognized any such principle, in economics at least, and if the labor unions are based upon it they are outlaw, so far as any hope of enforcing it is concerned, and it is bad for men to feel themselves outlaw. How is it," the lawyer continued, turning to the Altrurian, "in your country? We can see no issue here, if the first principle of organized labor antagonizes the first principle of business."

"But I don't understand precisely yet what the first principle of business is," returned my guest.

"Ah, that raises another interesting question," said the lawyer. "Of course every business man solves the problem practically according to his temperament and education, and I suppose that on first thoughts every business man would answer you accordingly. But perhaps the personal equation is something you wish to eliminate from the definition."

"Yes, of course."

"Still, I would rather not venture upon it first," said the lawyer. "Professor, what should you say was the first principle of business?"

"Buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest," the professor promptly answered.

"We will pass the parson and the doctor and the novelist as witnesses of no value. They can't possibly

have any cognizance of the first principle of business; their affair is to look after the souls and bodies and fancies of other people. But what should you say it was?" he asked the banker.

"I should say it was an enlightened conception of one's own interests."

"And you?"

The manufacturer had no hesitation in answering: "The good of Number One, first, last, and all the time. There may be a difference of opinion about the best way to get at it, the long way may be better, or the short way, the direct way or the oblique way, or the purely selfish way, or the partly selfish way, but if you ever lose sight of that end you might as well shut up shop. That seems to be the first law of nature, as well as the first law of business."

"Ah, we mustn't go to nature for our morality," the minister protested.

"We were not talking of morality," said the manufacturer, "we were talking of business."

This brought the laugh on the minister, but the lawyer cut it short. "Well, then, I don't really see why the trades-unions are not as business-like as the syndicates in their dealings with all those outside of themselves. Within themselves they practice an altruism of the highest order, but it is a tribal altruism: it is like that which prompts a Sioux to share his last mouthful with a starving Sioux, and to take the scalp of a starving Apache. How is it with your trades-unions in Altruria?" he asked my friend.

"We have no trades-unions in Altruria," he began.

"Happy Altruria!" cried the professor.

"We had them formerly," the Altrurian went on, "as you have them now. They claimed, as I suppose yours do, that they were forced into existence by the necessities of the case; that without union the workman was unable to meet the capitalist on anything like equal terms, or to withstand his encroachments and oppressions. But to maintain themselves they had to extinguish industrial liberty among the workmen themselves, and they had to practice great cruelties against those who refused to join them or who rebelled against them."

"They simply destroy them here," said the professor.

"Well," said the lawyer, from his judicial mind, "the great syndicates have no scruples in destroying a capitalist who won't come into them, or who tries

to go out They don't club him or stone him, but they undersell him and freeze him out they don't break his head, but they bankrupt him The principle is the same "

"Don't interrupt Mr Homos," the banker entreated "I am very curious to know just how they got rid of labor unions in Altruria "

"We had syndicates, too, and finally we had the reductio ad absurdum—we had a federation of labor unions and a federation of syndicates, that divided the nation into two camps The situation was not only impossible, but it was insupportably ridiculous "

I ventured to say, "It hasn't become quite so much of a joke with us yet "

"Isn't it in a fair way to become so?" asked the doctor, and he turned to the lawyer "What should you say was the logic of events among us for the last ten or twenty years?"

"There's nothing so capricious as the logic of events It's like a woman's reasoning—you can't tell what it's aimed at, or where it's going to fetch up all that you can do is to keep out of the way if possible We may come to some such condition of things as they have in Altruria, where the faith of the whole nation is pledged to secure every citizen in the pursuit of happiness, or we may revert to some former condition, and the master may again own the man, or we may hitch and joggle along indefinitely, as we are doing now "

"But come, now," said the banker, while he laid a caressing touch on the Altrurian's shoulder, "you don't mean to say honestly that everybody works with his hands in Altruria?"

"Yes, certainly We are mindful, as a whole people, of the divine law, 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread' " ³⁴

"But the capitalists? I'm anxious about Number One, you see "

"We have none "

"I forgot, of course But the lawyers, the doctors, the parsons, the novelists?"

"They all do their share of hand work "

The lawyer said "That seems to dispose of the question of the workingman in society But how about your minds? When do you cultivate your minds? When do the ladies of Altruria cultivate their minds, if they have to do their own work, as I sup-

pose they do? Or is it only the men who work, if they happen to be the husbands and fathers of the upper classes?"

The Altrurian seemed to be sensible of the kindly skepticism which persisted in our reception of his statements, after all we had read of Altruria He smiled indulgently, and said "You mustn't imagine that work in Altruria is the same as it is here As we all work, the amount that each one need do is very little, a few hours each day at the most, so that every man and woman has abundant leisure and perfect spirits for the higher pleasures which the education of their whole youth has fitted them to enjoy If you can understand a state of things where the sciences and arts and letters are cultivated for their own sake, and not as a means of livelihood"—

"No," said the lawyer, smiling, "I'm afraid we can't conceive of that We consider the pinch of poverty the highest incentive that a man can have If our gifted friend here," he said, indicating me, "were not kept like a toad under the harrow with his nose on the grindstone and the poorhouse staring him in the face"—

"For heaven's sake," I cried out, "don't mix your metaphors so, anyway!"

"If it were not for that and all the other hardships that literary men undergo—

Toil, envy, want, the patron and the jail—³⁵

his novels probably wouldn't be worth reading "

"Ah!" said the Altrurian as if he did not quite follow this joking, and to tell the truth, I never find the personal thing in very good taste "You will understand, then, how extremely difficult it is for me to imagine a condition of things like yours—although I have it under my very eyes—where the money consideration is the first consideration "

"Oh, excuse me!" urged the minister, "I don't think that's quite the case "

"I beg your pardon," said the Altrurian, sweetly, "you can see how easily I go astray "

"Why, I don't know," the banker interposed, "that you are so far out in what you say If you had said that money was always the first motive, I should have been inclined to dispute you, too, but when you say that money is the first consideration, I think you are quite right Unless a man secures his financial basis for his work, he can't do his work It's nonsense

³⁴ Cf Genesis iii 19

³⁵ From 'The Vanity of Human Wishes, by Samuel Johnson,

to pretend otherwise. So the money consideration is the first consideration. People here have to live by their work, and to live they must have money. Of course, we all recognize a difference in the qualities, as well as in the kinds, of work. The work of the laborer may be roughly defined as the necessity of his life, the work of the business man as the means, and the work of the artist and scientist as the end. We might refine upon these definitions and make them closer, but they will serve for illustration as they are. I don't think there can be any question as to which is the highest kind of work, some truths are self-evident. He is a fortunate man whose work is an end, and every business man sees this, and owns it to himself, at least when he meets some man of an æsthetic or scientific occupation. He knows that this luckier fellow has a joy in his work, which he can never feel in business, that his success in it can never be embittered by the thought that it is the failure of another, that if he does it well, it is pure good, that there cannot be any competition in it—there can be only a noble emulation, as far as the work itself is concerned. He can always look up to his work, for it is something above him, and a business man often has to look down upon his business, for it is often beneath him, unless he is a pretty low fellow."

I listened to all this in surprise, I knew that the banker was a cultivated man, a man of university training, and that he was a reader and a thinker, but he had always kept a certain reserve in his talk, which he now seemed to have thrown aside for the sake of the Altrurian, or because the subject had a charm that lured him out of himself. "Well, now," he continued, "the question is of the money consideration, which is the first consideration with us all: does it, or doesn't it degrade the work, which is the life, of those among us whose work is the highest? I understand that this is the misgiving which troubles you in view of our conditions?"

The Altrurian assented, and I thought it a proof of the banker's innate delicacy that he did not refer the matter, as far as it concerned the æsthetic life and work, to me; I was afraid he was going to do so. But he courteously proposed to keep the question impersonal, and he went on to consider it himself. "Well, I don't suppose any one can satisfy you fully. But I should say that it put such men under a double strain, and perhaps that is the reason why so many of them break down in a calling that is certainly far

less exhausting than business. On one side, the artist is kept to the level of the workingman, of the animal, of the creature whose sole affair is to get something to eat and somewhere to sleep. This is through his necessity. On the other side, he is exalted to the height of beings who have no concern but with the excellence of their work, which they were born and divinely authorized to do. This is through his purpose. Between the two, I should say that he got mixed, and that his work shows it."

None of the others said anything, and since I had not been personally appealed to, I felt the freer to speak. "If you will suppose me to be speaking from observation rather than experience," I began.

"By all means," said the banker, "go on," and the rest made haste in various forms to yield me the word.

"I should say that such a man certainly got mixed, but that his work kept itself pure from the money consideration, as it were, in spite of him. A painter, or actor, or even a novelist, is glad to get all he can for his work, and, such is our fallen nature, he does get all he knows how to get, but when he has once fairly passed into his work, he loses himself in it. He does not think whether it will pay or not, whether it will be popular or not, but whether he can make it good or not."

"Well, that is conceivable," said the banker. "But wouldn't he rather do something he would get less for, if he could afford it, than the thing he knows he will get more for? Doesn't the money consideration influence his choice of subject?"

"Oddly enough, I don't believe it does," I answered, after a moment's reflection. "A man makes his choice once for all when he embraces the æsthetic life, or rather it is made for him; no other life seems possible. I know there is a general belief that an artist does the kind of thing he has made go because it pays; but this only shows the prevalence of business ideals. If he did not love to do the thing he does he could not do it well, no matter how richly it paid."

"I am glad to hear it," said the banker, and he added to the Altrurian: "So you see we are not so bad as one would think. We are illogically better, in fact."

"Yes," the other assented. "I knew something of your literature as well as your conditions before I left home, and I perceived that by some anomaly, the

one was not tainted by the other. It is a miraculous proof of the divine mission of the poet."

"And the popular novelist," the lawyer whispered in my ear, but loud enough for the rest to hear, and they all testified their amusement at my cost.

The Altrurian, with his weak sense of humor, passed the joke. "It shows no signs of corruption from greed, but I can't help thinking that fine as it is, it might have been much finer if the authors who produced it had been absolutely freed to their work, and had never felt the spur of need."

"Are they absolutely freed to it in Altruria?" asked the professor. "I understood you that everybody had to work for his living in Altruria."

"That is a mistake. Nobody works for his living in Altruria, he works for others' living."

"Ah, that is precisely what our workmen object to doing here!" said the manufacturer. "In that last interview of mine with the walking delegate he had the impudence to ask me why my men should work for my living as well as their own."

"He couldn't imagine that you were giving them the work to do—the very means of life," said the professor.

"Oh, no, that's the last thing those fellows want to think of."

"Perhaps," the Altrurian suggested, "they might not have found it such a hardship to work for your living if their own had been assured, as it is with us. If you will excuse my saying it, we should think it monstrous in Altruria for any man to have another's means of life in his power, and in our condition it is hardly imaginable. Do you really have it in your power to take away a man's opportunity to earn a living?"

The manufacturer laughed uneasily. "It is in my power to take away his life, but I don't habitually shoot my fellowmen, and I never dismissed a man yet without good reason."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said the Altrurian. "I didn't dream of accusing you of such inhumanity. But you see our whole system is so very different that, as I said, it is hard for me to conceive of yours, and I am very curious to understand its workings. If you shot your fellowman, as you say, the law would punish you, but if for some reason that you decided to be good you took away his means of living, and he actually starved to death—"

"Then the law would have nothing to do with it,"

the professor replied for the manufacturer, who did not seem ready to answer. "But that is not the way things fall out. The man would be supported in idleness, probably, till he got another job, by his union, which would take the matter up."

"But I thought that our friend did not employ union labor," returned the Altrurian.

I found all this very uncomfortable, and tried to turn the talk back to a point that I felt curious about. "But in Altruria, if the literary class is not exempt from the rule of manual labor where do they find time and strength to write?"

"Why, you must realize that our manual labor is never engrossing or exhausting. It is no more than is necessary to keep the body in health. I do not see how you remain well here, you people of sedentary occupations."

"Oh, we all take some sort of exercise. We walk several hours a day, or we row, or we ride a bicycle, or a horse, or we fence."

"But to us," returned the Altrurian, with a growing frankness, which nothing but the sweetness of his manner would have excused, "exercise for exercise would appear stupid. The barren expenditure of force that began and ended in itself, and produced nothing, we should—if you will excuse my saying so—look upon as childish, if not insane or immoral."

IX

The next time the members of our little group came together, the manufacturer began at once upon the banker.

"I should think that our friend, the professor, here, would hardly like that notion of yours, that business, as business, has nothing to do with the education of a gentleman. If this is a business man's country, and if the professor has nothing in stock but the sort of education that business has no use for, I should suppose that he would want to go into some other line."

The banker mutely referred the matter to the professor, who said, with that cold grin of his which I hated.

"Perhaps we shall wait for business to purge and live cleanly. Then it will have some use for the education of a gentleman."

"I see," said the banker, "that I have touched the quick in both of you, when I hadn't the least notion of doing so. But I shouldn't, really, like to prophesy

which will adapt itself to the other education or business. Let us hope there will be mutual concessions. There are some pessimists who say that business methods, especially on the large scale of the trusts and combinations, have grown worse, instead of better, but this may be merely what is called a 'transition state.' Hamlet must be cruel to be kind,³⁶ the darkest hour comes before dawn and so on. Perhaps when business gets the whole affair of life into its hands, and runs the republic, as its enemies now¹⁰ accuse it of doing, the process of purging and living cleanly will begin. I have known lots of fellows who started in life rather scampishly, but when they felt secure of themselves, and believed that they could afford to be honest, they became so. There's no reason why the same thing shouldn't happen on a large scale. We must never forget that we are still a very novel experiment, though we have matured so rapidly in some respects, that we have come to regard ourselves as an accomplished fact. We are, really, less²⁰ so than we were forty years ago, with all the tremendous changes since the war. Before that, we could take certain matters for granted. If a man got out of work, he turned his hand to something else; if a man failed in business, he started in again from some other direction, as a last resort, in both cases, he went West, pre-empted a quarter section³⁷ of public land, and grew up with the country. Now, the country is grown up, the public land is gone; business is full on all sides and the hand that turned itself to something else has lost its cunning. The struggle for³⁰ life has changed from a free fight to an encounter of disciplined forces, and the free fighters that are left get ground to pieces between organized labor and organized capital. Decidedly, we are in a transition state, and if the higher education tried to adapt itself to business needs, there are chances that it might sacrifice itself without helping business. After all, how much education does business need? Were our great fortunes made by educated men, or men of⁴⁰ university training? I don't know but these young fellows are right about that."

"Yes, that may all be," I put in. "But it seems to me that you give Mr. Homos, somehow, a wrong impression of our economic life by your generalizations. You are a Harvard man yourself."

"Yes, and I am not a rich man. A million or two,

more or less, but what is that? I have suffered, at the start and all along, from the question as to what a man with the education of a gentleman ought to do in such and such a juncture. The fellows who have not that sort of education have not that sort of question, and they go in and win."

"So you admit, then," said the professor, "that the higher education elevates a business man's standard of morals?"

"Undoubtedly. That is one of its chief drawbacks," said the banker, with a laugh.

"Well," I said, with the deference due even to a man who had only a million or two, more or less, "we must allow *you* to say such things. But if the case is so bad with the business men who have made the great fortunes—the business men who have never had the disadvantage of a university education—I wish you would explain to Mr. Homos why, in every public exigency, we instinctively appeal to the business sense of the community, as if it were the fountain of wisdom, probity and equity. Suppose there were some question of vital interest—I won't say financial, but political, or moral, or social—on which it was necessary to rouse public opinion; what would be the first thing to do? To call a meeting, over the signatures of the leading business men, because no other names appeal with such force to the public. You might get up a call signed by all the novelists, artists, ministers, lawyers and doctors in the state, and it would not have a tithe of the effect, with the people at large, that a call signed by a few leading merchants, bank presidents, railroad men and trust officers, would have. What is the reason? It seems strange that I should be asking you to defend yourself against yourself."

"Not at all, my dear fellow, not at all!" the banker replied, with his caressing bonhomie. "Though I will confess, to begin with, that I do not expect to answer your question to your entire satisfaction. I can only do my best—on the installment plan."

He turned to the Altrurian, and then went on:

"As I said the other night, this is a business man's country. We are purely commercial people; money is absolutely to the fore; and business, which is the means of getting the most money, is the American ideal. If you like, you may call it the American fetish; I don't mind calling it so myself. The fact that business is our ideal, or our fetish, will account for the popular faith in business men, who form its priest-

³⁶ Cf. *Hamlet*, III, iv, 178

³⁷ A tract of land half a mile square, containing 160 acres.

hood, its hierarchy I don't know, myself, any other reasons for regarding business men as solidier than novelists, or artists, or ministers, not to mention lawyers and doctors. They are supposed to have long heads, but it appears that ninety five times out of a hundred they haven't. They are supposed to be very reliable, but it is almost invariably a business man, of some sort, who gets out to Canada while the state examiner is balancing his books, and it is usually the longest-headed business men who get plundered by 10 him. No, it is simply because business is our national ideal, that the business man is honored above all other men among us. In the aristocratic countries they forward a public object under the patronage of the nobility and gentry, in a plutocratic country they get the business men to endorse it. I suppose that the average American citizen feels that they wouldn't endorse a thing unless it was safe and the average American citizen likes to be safe—he is cautious. As a matter of fact, business men are always taking risks, 20 and business is a game of chance, in a certain degree. Have I made myself intelligible?"

"Entirely so," said the Altrurian, and he seemed so thoroughly well satisfied, that he forbore asking any question farther.

No one else spoke. The banker lighted a cigar, and resumed at the point where he left off when I ventured to enter upon the defense of his class with him. I must say that he had not convinced me at all. At that moment, I would rather have trusted him, in 30 any serious matter of practical concern, than all the novelists I ever heard of. But I thought I would leave the word to him, without further attempt to reinstate him in his self-esteem. In fact, he seemed to be getting along very well without it, or else he was feeling that mysterious control from the Altrurian which I had already suspected him of using. Voluntarily or involuntarily, the banker proceeded with his contribution to the Altrurian's stock of knowledge concerning our civilization.

"I don't believe, however, that the higher education is any more of a failure, as a provision for a business career, than the lower education is for the life of labor. I suppose that the hypercritical observer might say that in a wholly commercial civilization, like ours, the business man really needed nothing beyond the three R's, and the workingman needed no R at all. As a practical affair, there is a good deal to be said in favor of that view. The higher education

is part of the social ideal which we have derived from the past, from Europe. It is part of the provision for the life of leisure, the life of the aristocrat which nobody of our generation leads, except women. Our women really have some use for the education of a gentleman, but our men have none. How will that do for a generalization?" the banker asked of me.

"Oh," I admitted, with a laugh, "it is a good deal like one of my own. I have always been struck with that phase of our civilization."

"Well, then," the banker resumed, "take the lower education. This is part of the civic ideal which, I suppose, I may say we evolved from the depths of our inner consciousness of what an American citizen ought to be. It includes instruction in all the R's and in several other letters of the alphabet. It is given free by the state, and no one can deny that it is thoroughly socialistic in conception and application."

"Distinctly so," said the professor. "Now that the text books are furnished by the state, we have only to go a step farther, and provide a good, hot lunch for the children every day, as they do in Paris."

"Well," the banker returned, "I don't know that I should have much to say against that. It seems as reasonable as anything in the system of education which we force upon the working-classes. They know perfectly well, whether we do or not, that the three R's will not make their children better mechanics or laborers, and that, if the fight for a mere living is to go on, from generation to generation, they will have no leisure to apply the little learning they get in the public schools for their personal culture. In the mean time, we deprive the parents of their children's labor, in order that they may be better citizens for their schooling, as we imagine, I don't know whether they are or not. We offer them no sort of compensation for their time, and I think we ought to feel obliged to them for not wanting wages for their children while we are teaching them to be better citizens."

40 "You know," said the professor, "that has been suggested by some of their leaders."

"No, really? Well, that is too good!" The banker threw back his head, and roared, and we all laughed with him. When we had sobered down again, he said "I suppose that when a working man makes all the use he can of his lower education, he becomes a business man and then he doesn't need the higher. Professor, you seem to be left out in the cold, by our system, whichever way you take it."

"Oh," said the professor, "the law of supply and demand works both ways, it creates the demand, if the supply comes first, and if we keep on giving the sons of business men the education of a gentleman, we may yet make them feel the need of it. We shall evolve a new sort of business man."

"The sort that can't make money, or wouldn't exactly like to, on some terms?" asked the banker. "Well, perhaps we shall work out our democratic salvation in that way. When you have educated your new business man to the point where he can't consent to get rich at the obvious cost of others, you've got him on the way back to work with his hands. He will sink into the ranks of labor, and give the fellow with the lower education a chance. I've no doubt he'll take it. I don't know but you're right, professor."

The lawyer had not spoken, as yet. Now he said: "Then, it is education, after all, that is to bridge the chasm between the classes and the masses, though it seems destined to go a long way around about it. There was a time, I believe, when we expected religion to do that."

"Well, it may still be doing it, for all I know," said the banker. "What do you say?" he asked, turning to the minister. "You ought to be able to give us some statistics on the subject with that large congregation of yours. You preach to more people than any other pulpit in your city."

The banker named one of the principal cities in the east, and the minister answered, with modest pride: "I am not sure of that; but our society is certainly a very large one."

"Well, and how many of the lower classes are there in it—people who work for their living with their hands?"

The minister stirred uneasily in his chair, and at last he said, with evident unhappiness: "They—I suppose—they have their own churches. I have never thought that such a separation of the classes was right, and I have had some of the very best people—socially and financially—with me in the wish that there might be more brotherliness between the rich and poor among us. But as yet"—

He stopped; the banker pursued. "Do you mean there are no working-people in your congregation?"

"I cannot think of any," returned the minister so miserably that the banker forbore to press the point.

The lawyer broke the awkward pause which fol-

lowed. "I have heard it asserted that there is no country in the world where the separation of the classes is so absolute as in ours. In fact I once heard a Russian revolutionist, who had lived in exile all over Europe, say that he had never seen anywhere such a want of kindness or sympathy between rich and poor, as he had observed in America. I doubted whether he was right. But he believed that, if it ever came to the industrial revolution with us, the fight would be more uncompromising than any such fight that the world had ever seen. There was no respect from low to high, he said, and no consideration from high to low, as there were in countries with traditions and old associations."

"Well," said the banker, "there may be something in that. Certainly, so far as the two forces have come into conflict here, there has been no disposition, on either side, to 'make war with the water of roses.' It's astonishing, in fact, to see how ruthless the fellows who have just got up are towards the fellows who are still down. And the best of us have been up only a generation or two—and the fellows who are still down know it."

"And what do you think would be the outcome of such a conflict?" I asked, with my soul divided between fear of it, and the perception of its excellence as material. My fancy vividly sketched the outline of a story which should forecast the struggle and its event, somewhat on the plan of the Battle of Dorking.³⁸

"We should beat," said the banker, breaking his cigar-ash off with his little finger; and I instantly cast him with his ironic calm, for the part of a great patrician leader, in my Fall of the Republic. Of course, I disguised him somewhat, and travestied his worldly bonhomie with the bluff sang-froid of the soldier; these things are easily done.

"What makes you think we should beat?" asked the manufacturer, with a certain curiosity.

"Well, all the good jingo reasons: we have got the materials for beating. Those fellows throw away their strength whenever they begin to fight, and they've been so badly generaled, up to the present time, that they have wanted to fight at the outset of every quarrel. They have been beaten in every quarrel, but still they always want to begin by fighting. That is all right. When they have learned enough to begin by

³⁸ Title of an account of imaginary invasion of England published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1871 by Sir G. T. Chesney.

voting, then we shall have to look out. But if they keep on fighting and always putting themselves in the wrong and getting the worst of it, perhaps we can fix the voting so we needn't be any more afraid of that than we are of the fighting. It's astonishing how shortsighted they are. They have no conception of any cure for their grievances, except more wages and fewer hours."

"But," I asked, "do you really think they have any just grievances?"

"Of course not, as a business man," said the banker. "If I were a workingman, I should probably think differently. But we will suppose for the sake of argument, that their day is too long and their pay is too short. How do they go about to better themselves? They strike. Well, a strike is a fight, and in a fight, now a days, it is always skill and money that win. The workingmen can't stop till they have put themselves outside of the public sympathy which the newspapers say is so potent in their behalf, I never saw that it did them the least good. They begin by boycotting, and breaking the heads of the men who want to work. They destroy property, and they interfere with business—the two absolutely sacred things in the American religion. Then we call out the militia, and shoot a few of them, and their leaders declare the strike off. It is perfectly simple."

"But will it be quite as simple," I asked, reluctant in behalf of my projected romance, to have the matter so soon disposed of, "will it be quite so simple if their leaders ever persuade the workingmen to leave the militia, as they threaten to do, from time to time?"

"No, not quite so simple," the banker admitted. "Still, the fight would be comparatively simple. In the first place, I doubt—though I won't be certain about it—whether there are a great many workingmen in the militia now. I rather fancy it is made up, for the most part, of clerks and small tradesmen, and bookkeepers and such employees of business as have time and money for it. I may be mistaken."

No one seemed able to say whether he was mistaken or not, and, after waiting a moment, he proceeded. "I feel pretty sure that it is so in the city companies and regiments, at any rate, and that if every workingman left them, it would not seriously impair their effectiveness. But when the workingmen have left the militia, what have they done? They have eliminated the only thing that disqualifies it for

prompt and unspiring use against strikers. As long as they are in it we might have our misgivings, but if they were once out of it, we should have none. And what would they gain? They would not be allowed to arm and organize as an inimical force. That was settled once for all, in Chicago, in the case of the International Groups.³⁹ A few squads of police men would break them up. Why," the banker exclaimed, with his good humored laugh, "how preposterous they are when you come to look at it! They are in the majority, the immense majority, if you count the farmers, and they prefer to behave as if they were the hopeless minority. They say they want an eight hour law, and every now and then they strike, and try to fight it. Why don't they vote it? They could make it the law in six months, by such overwhelming numbers that no one would dare to evade or defy it. They can make any law they want, but they prefer to break such laws as we have. That 'alienates public sympathy,' the newspapers say, but the spectacle of their stupidity and helpless wilfulness is so lamentable that I could almost pity them. If they chose, it would take only a few years to transform our government into the likeness of anything they wanted. But they would rather not have what they want, apparently, if they can only keep themselves from getting it, and they have to work hard to do that!"

"I suppose," I said, "that they are misled by the un-American principles and methods of the socialists among them."

"Why, no," returned the banker, "I shouldn't say that. As far as I understand it, the socialists are the only fellows among them who propose to vote their ideas into laws, and nothing can be more American than that. I don't believe the socialists stir up the strikes, at least among our workingmen, though the newspapers convict them of it, generally without trying them. The socialists seem to accept the strikes as the inevitable outcome of the situation, and they make use of them as proofs of the industrial discontent. But, luckily for the status, our labor leaders are not socialists, for youi socialist, whatever you may say against him, has generally thought himself into a socialist. He knows that until the workingmen stop fighting, and get down to voting—until they consent to be the majority—there is no hope for them. I am

³⁹ Allusion to the Haymarket Square explosion in Chicago, May 4, 1886, which was attributed to foreign labor agitators.

not talking of anarchists, mind you, but of socialists, whose philosophy is more law, not less, and who look forward to an order so just that it can't be disturbed."

"And what," the minister faintly said, "do you think will be the outcome of it all?"

"We had that question the other night, didn't we? Our legal friend, here, seemed to feel that we might rub along indefinitely as we are doing, or work out an Altruria of our own; or go back to the patriarchal stage, and own our workingmen. He seemed not to have so much faith in the logic of events as I have. I doubt if it is altogether a woman's logic. *Parole femminile, fatti maschili*,⁴⁰ and the logic of events isn't altogether words, it's full of hard knocks, too. But I'm no prophet. I can't forecast the future; I prefer to take it as it comes. There's a little tract of William Morris's though—I forget just what he calls it⁴¹—that is full of curious and interesting speculation on this point. He thinks that if we keep the road we are now going, the last state of labor will be like its first, and it will be owned."

"Oh, I don't believe that will ever happen in America," I protested.

"Why not?" asked the banker. "Practically, it is owned already in a vastly greater measure than we recognize. And where would the great harm be? The new slavery would not be like the old. There needn't be irresponsible whipping and separation of families, and private buying and selling. The proletariat would probably be owned by the state, as it was at one time in Greece, or by large corporations, which would be much more in keeping with the genius of our free institutions and an enlightened public opinion would cast safeguards about it in the form of law to guard it from abuse. But it would be strictly policed, localized, and controlled. There would probably be less suffering than there is now, when a man may be cowed into submission to any terms through the suffering of his family; when he may be starved out and turned out if he is unruly. You may be sure that nothing of that kind would happen in the new

slavery. We have not had nineteen hundred years of Christianity for nothing."

The banker paused, and as the silence continued he broke it with a laugh, which was a prodigious relief to my feelings, and I suppose to the feelings of all. I perceived that he had been joking, and I was confirmed in this when he turned to the Altrurian and laid his hand upon his shoulder. "You see," he said, "I'm a kind of Altrurian myself. What is the reason why we should not found a new Altruria here on the lines I've drawn? Have you never had philosophers—well, call them philanthropists; I don't mind—of my way of thinking among you?"

"Oh, yes," said the Altrurian. "At one time, just before we emerged from the competitive conditions, there was much serious question whether capital should not own labor, instead of labor owning capital. That was many hundred years ago."

"I am proud to find myself such an advanced thinker," said the banker. "And how came you to decide that labor should own capital?"

"We voted it," answered the Altrurian.

"Well," said the banker, "our fellows are still fighting it, and getting beaten."

I found him later in the evening, talking with Mrs. Makely. "My dear sir," I said, "I liked your frankness with my Altrurian friend immensely, and it may be well to put the worst foot foremost; but what is the advantage of not leaving us a leg to stand upon?"

He was not in the least offended at my boldness, as I had feared he might be, but he said with that jolly laugh of his, "Capital! Well, perhaps I have worked my candor a little too hard; I suppose there is such a thing. But don't you see that it leaves me in the best possible position to carry the war into Altruria, when we get him to open up about his native land?"

"Ah! If you can get him to do it."

"Well, we were just talking about that. Mrs. Makely has a plan."

"Yes," said the lady, turning an empty chair near her own, toward me. "Sit down and listen!"

⁴⁰ "Feminine words, masculine deeds"

⁴¹ *News from Nowhere*, 1891

FROM

My First Visit to New England ⁴²

I

If there was any one in the world who had his being more wholly in literature than I had in 1860, I am sure I should not have known where to find him and I doubt if he could have been found nearer the centres of literary activity than I then was, or among those more purely devoted to literature than myself. I had been for three years a writer of news paragraphs, book notices, and political leaders on a daily paper in an inland city, and I do not know that my life differed outwardly from that of any other young journalist, who had begun as I had in a country printing office, and might be supposed to be looking forward to advancement in his profession or in public affairs. But inwardly it was altogether different with me. Inwardly I was a poet, with no wish to be anything else, unless in a moment of careless affluence I might so far forget myself as to be a novelist. I was, with my friend J. J. Piatt, the half author of a little volume of very unknown verse,⁴³ and Mr. Lowell had lately accepted and had begun to print in the *Atlantic Monthly* five or six poems of mine. Besides this I had written poems, and sketches, and criticisms for the *Saturday Press* of New York, a long forgotten but once very lively expression of literary intention in an extinct bohemia of that city, and I was always writing poems, and sketches, and criticisms in our own paper. These, as well as my feats in the renowned periodicals of the East, met with kindness, if not honor, in my own city which ought to have given me grave doubts whether I was any real prophet. But it only intensified my literary ambition, already so strong that my veins might well have run ink rather than blood, and gave me a higher opinion of my fellow citizens, if such a thing could be. They were indeed very charming people, and such of them as I mostly saw were readers and lovers of books. Society in Columbus at that day had a pleasant refinement which I think I do not exaggerate in the fond retrospect. It had the finality which it seems to have had

nowhere since the war, it had certain fixed ideals, which were none the less graceful and becoming because they were the simple old American ideals, now vanished, or fast vanishing before the knowledge of good and evil as they have it in Europe and as it has imparted itself to American travel and sojourn. There was a mixture of many strains in the capital of Ohio, as there was throughout the State. Virginia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, New York, and New England all joined to characterize the manners and customs. I suppose it was the South which gave the social tone, the intellectual taste among the elders was the Southern taste for the classic and the standard in literature, but we who were younger preferred the modern authors: we read Thackeray, and George Eliot, and Hawthorne, and Charles Reade, and De Quincy, and Tennyson and Browning and Emerson, and Longfellow, and I read Heine,⁴⁴ and evermore Heine, when there was not some new thing from the others. Now and then an immediate French book penetrated to us: we read Michelet⁴⁵ and About,⁴⁶ I remember. We looked to England and the East largely for our literary opinions, we accepted the *Saturday Review* as law if we could not quite receive it as gospel. One of us took the *Cornhill Magazine*, because Thackeray was the editor, the *Atlantic Monthly* counted many readers among us, and a visiting young lady from New England, who screamed at sight of the periodical in one of our houses, "Why, have you got the *Atlantic Monthly* out here?" could be answered, with cold superiority, "There are several contributors to the *Atlantic* in Columbus." There were in fact two: my roommate, who wrote Browning for it, while I wrote Heine and Longfellow. But I suppose two are as rightfully several as twenty are.

[vii]

* * *

I had stopped in Boston at the Tremont House, which was still one of the first hostelrys of the coun-

⁴² From *Part First of Literary Friends and Acquaintance*. Copyright 1900 by Harper & Brothers, copyright 1928 by Mildred Howells and John Mead Howells. Reprinted by kind permission of Miss Howells.

⁴³ *Poems of Two Friends*, Columbus, Ohio, 1860.

⁴⁴ Heinrich Heine (1799-1857), German lyric poet and critic.

⁴⁵ Jules Michelet (1798-1874), French historian, naturalist, and teacher.

⁴⁶ Edmond François Valentine About (1828-85), French novelist, essayist, and journalist.

try, and I must have inquired my way to Cambridge there, but I was sceptical of the direction the Cambridge horse-car took when I found it, and I hinted to the driver my anxieties as to why he should be starting east when I had been told that Cambridge was west of Boston. He reassured me in the laconic and sarcastic manner of his kind, and we really reached Cambridge by the route he had taken.

The beautiful elms that shaded great part of the way massed themselves in the "groves of academe" at the Square, and showed pleasant glimpses of "Old Harvard's scholar factories red," then far fewer than now. It must have been in vacation, for I met no one as I wandered through the college yard, trying to make up my mind as to how I should learn where Lowell lived, for it was he whom I had come to find. He had not only taken the poems I sent him, but he had printed two of them in a single number of the *Atlantic*, and had even written me a little note about them, which I wore next my heart in my breast 20 pocket till I almost wore it out, and so I thought I might fitly report myself to him. But I have always been helpless in finding my way, and I was still depressed by my failure to convince the horse-car driver that he had taken the wrong road. I let several people go by without questioning them, and those I did ask abashed me farther by not knowing what I wanted to know. When I had remitted my search for the moment, an ancient man, with an open mouth and an inquiring eye, whom I never after- 30 wards made out in Cambridge, addressed me with a hospitable offer to show me the Washington Elm. I thought this would give me time to embolden myself for the meeting with the editor of the *Atlantic* if I should ever find him, and I went with that kind old man, who when he had shown me the tree, and the spot where Washington stood when he took command of the continental forces, said that he had a branch of it, and that if I would come to his house with him he would give me a piece. In the end, I 40 meant merely to flatter him into telling me where I could find Lowell, but I dissembled my purpose and pretended a passion for a piece of the historic elm, and the old man led me not only to his house but his wood-house, where he sawed me off a block so generous that I could not get it into my pocket. I feigned the gratitude which I could see that he expected, and then I took courage to put my question to him. Perhaps that patriarch lived only in the past,

and cared for history and not literature. He confessed that he could not tell me where to find Lowell, but he did not forsake me, he set forth with me upon the street again, and let no man pass without asking him. In the end we met one who was able to say where Mr. Lowell was, and I found him at last in a little study at the rear of a pleasant, old-fashioned house near the Delta.

Lowell was not then at the height of his fame, he had just reached his thirty years after, when he died, but I doubt if he was ever after a greater power in his own country, or more completely embodied the literary aspiration which would not and could not part itself from the love of freedom and the hope of justice. For the sake of these he had been willing to suffer the reproach which followed their friends in the earlier days of the anti-slavery struggle. He had outlived the reproach long before; but the fear of his strength remained with those who had felt it, and he had not made himself more generally loved by the *Fable for Critics* than by the *Biglow Papers*, probably. But in the *Vision of Sir Launfal* and the *Legend of Brittany* he had won a liking if not a listening far wider than his humor and his wit had got him; and in his lectures on the English poets, given not many years before he came to the charge of the *Atlantic*, he had proved himself easily the wisest and finest critic in our language. He was already, more than any American poet,

"Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
The love of love" 47

and he held a place in the public sense which no other author among us has held. I had myself never been a great reader of his poetry, when I met him, though when I was a boy of ten years I had heard my father repeat passages from the *Biglow Papers* against war and slavery and the war for slavery upon Mexico, and later I had read those criticisms of English poetry, and I knew Sir Launfal must be Lowell in some sort, but my love for him as a poet was chiefly centred in my love for his tender rhyme. *Auf Wiedersehen*, which I cannot yet read without something of the young pathos it first stirred in me. I knew and felt his greatness somehow apart from the literary proofs of it, he ruled my fancy and held my allegiance as a character, as a man; and I am neither sorry nor ashamed that I was abashed when I first came into

47 Tennyson, "The Poet."

his presence, and that in spite of his words of welcome I sat inwardly quaking before him. He was then forty-one years old, and nineteen my senior, and if there had been nothing else to awe me, I might well have been quelled by the disparity of our ages. But I have always been willing and even eager to do homage to men who have done something and notably to men who have done something in the sort I wished to do something in, myself. I could never recognize any other sort of superiority, but that I am proud to recognize, and I had before Lowell some such feeling as an obscure subaltern might have before his general. He was by nature a bit of a disciplinarian, and the effect was from him as well as in me, I dare say he let me feel whatever difference there was, as helplessly as I felt it. At the first encounter with people he always was apt to have a certain frosty shyness, a smiling cold, as from the long, high sunned winters of his Puntan race, he was not quite himself till he had made you aware of his quality, then no one could be sweeter, tenderer, warmer than he, then he made you free of his whole heart, but you must be his captive before he could do that. His whole personality had now an instant charm for me, I could not keep my eyes from those beautiful eyes of his, which had a certain starry serenity, and looked out so purely from under his white forehead, shadowed with auburn hair untouched by age, or from the smile that shaped the auburn beard, and gave the face in its form and color the Christ look which Page's⁴⁸ portrait has flattered in it.

His voice had as great a fascination for me as his face. The vibrant tenderness and the crisp clearness of the tones, the perfect modulation, the clear enunciation, the exquisite accent, the elect diction—I did not know enough then to know that these were the gifts, these were the graces, of one from whose tongue our rough English came music such as I should never hear from any other. In his speech there was nothing of our slipshod American slovenliness, but a truly Italian conscience and an artistic sense of beauty in the instrument.

I saw, before he sat down across his writing-table from me, that he was not far from the medium height, but his erect carriage made the most of his five feet and odd inches. He had been smoking the pipe he loved, and he put it back in his mouth, presently, as if he found himself at greater ease with it,

⁴⁸ William Page (1811-85), American painter

when he began to chat, or rather to let me show what manner of young man I was by giving me the first word. I told him of the trouble I had in finding him, and I could not help dragging in something about Heine's search for Borne,⁴⁹ when he went to see him in Frankfort, but I felt at once this was a false start, for Lowell was such an impassioned lover of Cambridge, which was truly his *patria*, in the Italian sense, that it must have hurt him to be unknown to any one in it, he said, a little dryly, that he should not have thought I would have so much difficulty, but he added, forgivingly, that this was not his own house, which he was out of for the time. Then he spoke to me of Heine, and when I showed my ardor for him, he sought to temper it with some judicious criticisms, and told me that he had kept the first poem I sent him, for the long time it had been unacknowledged, to make sure that it was not a translation. He asked me about myself, and my name, and its Welsh origin, and seemed to find the vanity I had in this harmless enough. When I said I had tried hard to believe that I was at least the literary descendant of Sir James Howells,⁵⁰ he corrected me gently with "James Howel," and took down a volume of the *Familiar Letters* from the shelves behind him to prove me wrong. This was always his habit, as I found afterwards, when he quoted anything from a book he liked to get it and read the passage over, as if he tasted a kind of hoarded sweetness in the words. It visibly vexed him if they showed him in the least mistaken, but

The love he bore to learning was at fault⁵¹

for this foible, and that other of setting people right if he thought them wrong. I could not assert myself against his version of Howel's name, for my edition of his letters was far away in Ohio, and I was obliged to own that the name was split in several different ways in it. He perceived, no doubt, why I had chosen the form likest my own, with the title which the pleasant old turncoat ought to have had from the many masters he served according to their many minds, but never had except from that erring edition. He did not afflict me for it, though, probably it amused him too much, he asked me about the West, and when he found that I was as proud of the West as I was of

⁴⁹ Ludwig Borne (1786-1836), noted German satirist and political writer

⁵⁰ James Howell (1595-1666) born in Wales

⁵¹ Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, l. 206, "in fault"

Wales, he seemed even better pleased, and said he had always fancied that human nature was laid out on rather a larger scale there than in the East, but he had seen very little of the West. In my heart I did not think this then, and I do not think it now, human nature has had more ground to spread over in the West, that is all, but "it was not for me to bandy words with my sovereign"⁵² He said he liked to hear of the differences between the different sections, for what we had most to fear in our country was a ¹⁰ wearisome sameness of type

He did not say now, or at any other time during the many years I knew him, any of those slighting things of the West which I had so often to suffer from Eastern people, but suffered me to praise it all I would. He asked me what way I had taken in coming to New England, and when I told him, and began to rave of the beauty and quaintness of French Canada, and to pour out my joy in Quebec, he said, with a smile that had now lost all its frost, Yes, ²⁰ Quebec was a bit of the seventeenth century, it was in many ways more French than France, and its people spoke the language of Voltaire, with the accent of Voltaire's time.

I do not remember what else he talked of, though once I remembered it with what I believed an ineffaceable distinctness. I set nothing of it down at the time, I was too busy with the letters I was writing for a Cincinnati paper, and I was severely bent upon keeping all personalities out of them. This was very ³⁰ well, but I could wish now that I had transgressed at least so far as to report some of the things that Lowell said, for the paper did not print my letters, and it would have been perfectly safe, and very useful for the present purpose. But perhaps he did not say anything very memorable, to do that you must have something positive in your listener; and I was the mere response, the hollow echo, that youth must be in like circumstances. I was all the time afraid of wearing my welcome out, and I hurried to go when ⁴⁰ I would so gladly have staid. I do not remember where I meant to go, or why he should have undertaken to show me the way across-lots, but this was what he did, and when we came to a fence, which I clambered gracelessly over, he put his hands on the top, and tried to take it at a bound. He tried twice,

⁵² "It was not for me to bandy civilities with my Sovereign," Samuel Johnson, who had met the king—Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (I. F. Powell's revision of G. B. Hill's edition, 1767), vol. II, p. 35

and then laughed at his failure, but not with any great pleasure, and he was not content till a third trial carried him across. Then he said, "I commonly do that the first time," as if it were a frequent habit with him, while I remained discreetly silent, and for that moment at least felt myself the elder of the man who had so much of the boy in him. He had indeed, much of the boy in him to the last, and he parted with each hour of his youth reluctantly, pathetically.

VIII

We walked across what must have been Jarvis Field to what must have been North Avenue, and there he left me. But before he let me go he held my hand while he could say that he wished me to dine with him; only, he was not in his own house, and he would ask me to dine with him at the Parker House in Boston, and would send me word of the ²⁰ time later.

I suppose I may have spent part of the intervening time in viewing the wonders of Boston, and visiting the historic scenes and places in it and about it. I certainly went over to Charlestown, and ascended Bunker Hill Monument, and explored the navy-yard, where the immemorial man-of-war begun in Jackson's time was then silently stretching itself under its long shed in a poetic arrest, as if the failure of the appropriation for its completion had been some kind of enchantment. In Boston, I early presented my letter of credit to the publisher it was drawn upon, not that I needed money at the moment, but from a young eagerness to see if it would be honored, and a literary attaché of the house kindly went about with me, and showed me the life of the city. A great city it seemed to me then, and a seething vortex of business as well as a whirl of gayety, as I saw it in Washington Street, and in a promenade concert at Copeland's restaurant in Tremont Row. Probably I brought some idealizing ⁴⁰ force to bear upon it, for I was not all so strange to the world as I must seem, perhaps I accounted for quality as well as quantity in my impressions of the New England metropolis, and aggrandized it in the ratio of its literary importance. It seemed to me old, even after Quebec, and very likely I credited the actual town with all the dead and gone Bostonians in my sentimental census. If I did not it was no fault of my cicerone, who thought even more of the city he showed me than I did. I do not know now who he

was, and I never saw him after I came to live there, with any certainty that it was he, though I was often tormented with the vision of a spectacled face like his, but not like enough to warrant me in addressing him

He became part of that ghostly Boston of my first visit, which would sometimes return and possess again the city I came to know so familiarly in later years, and to be so passionately interested in. Some color of my prime impressions has tinged the fictitious experiences of people in my books, but I find very little of it in my memory. This is like a web of faded old lace, which I have to take carefully into my hold for fear of its fragility, and make out as best I can the figure once so distinct in it. There are the narrow streets, stretching seawards to the docks, which I haunted for their quaintness, and there is Faneuil Hall,⁵³ which I cared to see so much more because Wendell Phillips⁵⁴ had spoken in it than because Otis⁵⁵ and Adams⁵⁶ had. There is the old Colonial House, and there is the State House, which I dare say I explored, with the Common sloping before it. There is Beacon Street, with the Hancock House where it is incredibly no more, and there are the beginnings of Commonwealth Avenue, and the other streets of the Back Bay, laid out with their basements left hollowed in the made land, which the gravel trains were yet making out of the westward hills. There is the Public Garden, newly planned and planted, but without the massive bridge destined to make so ungratefully little of the lake that occasioned it. But it is all very vague, and I could easily believe now that it was some one else who saw it then in my place.

I think that I did not try to see Cambridge the same day that I saw Lowell, but wisely came back to my hotel in Boston, and tried to realize the fact. I went out another day, with an acquaintance from Ohio, whom I ran upon in the street. We went to Mount Auburn⁵⁷ together, and I viewed its monuments with a reverence which I dare say their artistic quality did not merit. But I am not sorry for this, for perhaps they are not quite so bad as some people pre-

tend. The Gothic chapel of the cemetery, unstoried as it was, gave me, with its half-dozen statues standing or sitting about an emotion such as I am afraid I could not receive now from the Acropolis,⁵⁸ Westminster Abbey,⁵⁹ and Santa Croce⁶⁰ in one. I tried hard for some æsthetic sense of it, and I made believe that I thought this thing and that thing in the place moved me with its fitness or beauty, but the truth is that I had no taste in anything but literature, and did not feel the effect I would so willingly have experienced.

I did genuinely love the elmy quiet of the dear old Cambridge streets, though, and I had a real and instant pleasure in the yellow colonial houses, with their white corners and casements and their green blinds, that lurked behind the shrubbery of the avenue I passed through to Mount Auburn. The most beautiful among them was the most interesting for me, for it was the house of Longfellow, my companion, who had seen it before, pointed it out to me with an air of custom, and I would not let him see that I valued the first sight of it as I did. I had hoped that somehow I might be so favored as to see Longfellow himself, but when I asked about him of those who knew, they said, "Oh, he is at Nahant," and I thought that Nahant must be a great way off, and at any rate I did not feel authorized to go to him there. Neither did I go to see the author of *The Amber Gods*,⁶¹ who lived at Newburyport, I was told, as if I should know where Newburyport was. I did not know, and I hated to ask. Besides, it did not seem so simple as it had seemed in Ohio, to go and see a young lady simply because I was infatuated with her literature, even as the envoy of all the infatuated young people of Columbus, I could not quite do this, and when I got home, I had to account for my failure as best I could. Another failure of mine was the sight of Whittier, which I then very much longed to have. They said, "Oh, Whittier lives at Amesbury," but that put him at an indefinite distance, and without the introduction I never would ask for, I found it impossible to set out in quest of him. In the end, I saw no one in New England whom I was not presented to in the regular way, except Lowell, whom I thought I had a right to call upon in my quality of contribu-

⁵³ Boston public market and town meeting place, named for Peter Faneuil.

⁵⁴ Wendell Phillips (1811-82), abolitionist lecturer.

⁵⁵ James Otis (1725-84), Boston lawyer who upheld rights of colonists in opposition to Stamp Act.

⁵⁶ John Adams (1735-1826), second President of the United States.

⁵⁷ Noted cemetery in Cambridge, Mass.

⁵⁸ Temple in Athens, Greece.

⁵⁹ In London.

⁶⁰ Near Florence, Italy.

⁶¹ Hiram Prescott Spofford (1835-1921), *The Amber Gods and Other Stories*, 1863.

tor, and from the acquaintance I had with him by letter I neither praise nor blame myself for this, it was my shyness that withheld me rather than my merit. There is really no harm in seeking the presence of a famous man, and I doubt if the famous man resents the wish of people to look upon him without some measure, great or little, of affectation. There are bores everywhere, but he is likelier to find them in the wonted figures of society than in those young people or old people, who come to him in the love of what he has done. I am well aware how furiously Tennyson sometimes met his worshippers, and how insolently Carlyle, but I think these facts are little specks in their sincerity. Our own gentler and honester celebrities did not forbid approach, and I have known some of them caress adorers who seemed hardly worthy of their kindness, but that was better than to have hurt any sensitive spirit who had ventured too far, by the rules that govern us with common men.

XIII

I must have lingered in Boston for the introduction to Hawthorne which Lowell had offered me, for when it came, with a little note of kindness and counsel for myself such as only Lowell had the gift of writing, it was already so near Sunday that I staved over till Monday before I started. I do not recall what I did with the time, except keep myself from making it a burden to the people I knew, and wandering about the city alone. Nothing of it remains to me except the fortune that favored me that Sunday night with a view of the old Granary Burying-ground on Tremont Street. I found the gates open, and I explored every path in the place, wreaking myself in such meagre emotion as I could get from the tomb of the Franklin family, and rejoicing with the whole soul of my Western modernity in the evidence of a remote antiquity which so many of the dim inscriptions afforded. I do not think that I have ever known anything practically older than these monuments, though I have since supped so full of classic and mediæval ruin. I am sure that I was more deeply touched by the epitaph of a poor little Puntan maiden who died at sixteen in the early sixteenth century than afterwards by the tomb of Cæcilia Metella, and that the heartache which I tried to put into verse when I got back to my room in the hotel was none the less genuine because it would not lend

itself to my literary purpose, and remains nothing but pathos to this day.

I am not able to say how I reached the town of Lowell, where I went before going to Concord, that I might ease the unhappy conscience I had about those factories which I hated so much to see, and have it clean for the pleasure of meeting the fabricator of visions whom I was authorized to molest in any air-castle where I might find him. I only know that I went to Lowell, and visited one of the great mills, which with their whirring spools, the ceaseless flight of their shuttles, and the bewildering sight and sound of all their mechanism have since seemed to me the death of the joy that ought to come from work, if not the captivity of those who tended them. But then I thought it right and well for me to be standing by,

With sick and scornful looks averse,

while these others toiled, I did not see the tragedy in it, and I got my pitiful literary antipathy away as soon as I could, no wiser for the sight of the ingenious contrivances I inspected, and I am sorry to say no sadder. In the cool of the evening I sat at the door of my hotel, and watched the long files of the work-worn factory-girls stream by, with no concern for them but to see which was pretty and which was plain, and with no dream of a truer order than that which gave them ten hours' work a day in those hideous mills and lodged them in the barracks where they rested from their toil.

xiv

I wonder if there is a stage that still runs between Lowell and Concord, past meadow walls, and under the caressing boughs of way-side elms, and through the bird-haunted gloom of woodland roads, in the freshness of the summer morning? By a blessed chance I found that there was such a stage in 1860, and I took it from my hotel, instead of going back to Boston and up to Concord as I must have had to do by train. The journey gave me the intimacy of the New England country as I could have had it in no other fashion, and for the first time I saw it in all the summer sweetness which I have often steeped my soul in since. The meadows were newly mown, and the air was fragrant with the grass, stretching in long winrows among the brown boulders, or capped with canvas in the little haycocks it had been gathered into the day before. I was fresh from the affluent

farms of the Western Reserve, and this care of the grass touched me with a rude pity which I also bestowed on the meagre fields of corn and wheat, but still the land was lovelier than any I had ever seen, with its old farmhouses, and brambled gray stone walls, its stony hillsides, its staggering orchards its wooded tops, and its thick bracken'd valleys. From West to East the difference was as great as I afterwards found it from America to Europe, and my impression of something quaint and strange was no keener when I saw Old England the next year than when I saw New England now. I had imagined the landscape bare of trees, and I was astonished to find it almost as full of them as at home, though they all looked very little, as they well might to eyes used to the primeval forests of Ohio. The road ran through them from time to time, and took their coolness on its smooth hard reaches and then issued again in the glister of the open fields.

I made phrases to myself about the scenery as we drove along, and yes, I suppose I made phrases about the young girl who was one of the inside passengers, and who, when the common strangeness had somewhat worn off, began to sing, and sang most of the way to Concord. Perhaps she was not very sage, and I am sure she was not of the caste of *Veie de Veie*, but she was pretty enough, and she had a voice of a birdlike tunableness so that I would not have her out of the memory of that pleasant journey if I could. She was long ago an elderly woman, if she lives, and I suppose she would not now point out her fellow-passenger if he strolled in the evening by the house where she had dismounted, upon her arrival in Concord, and laugh and pull another girl away from the window, in the high excitement of the prodigious adventure.

xv

Her fellow passenger was in far other excitement, he was to see Hawthorne, and in a manner to meet Priscilla and Zenobia, and Hester Prynne and little Pearl, and Miriam and Hilda, and Hollingsworth and Coverdale, and Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, and Donatello and Kenyon, and he had no heart for any such poor little reality as that, who could not have been got into any story that one could respect, and must have been difficult even in a Heinesque poem.

I wasted that whole evening and the next morning in fond delaying, and it was not until after the in-

different dinner I got at the tavern where I stopped, that I found courage to go and present Lowell's letter to Hawthorne. I would almost have foregone meeting the weird genius only to have kept that letter for it said certain infinitely precious things of me with such a sweetness, such a grace as Lowell alone could give his praise. Years afterwards, when Hawthorne was dead, I met Mrs. Hawthorne, and told her of the pang I had in parting with it, and she sent it me, doubly enriched by Hawthorne's keeping. But now if I were to see him at all I must give up my letter, and I carried it in my hand to the door of the cottage he called *The Wayside*. It was never otherwise than a very modest place, but the modesty was greater then than to day, and there was already some preliminary carpentry at one end of the cottage, which I saw was to result in an addition to it. I recall pleasant fields across the road before it, behind rose a hill wooded with low pines, such as is made in *Septimius Felton* the scene of the involuntary duel between Septimius and the young British officer. I have a sense of the woods coming quite down to the house, but if this was so I do not know what to do with a grassy slope which seems to have stretched part way up the hill. As I approached, I looked for the tower which the author was fabled to climb into at sight of the coming guest, and pull the ladder up after him, and I wondered whether he would fly before me in that sort, or imagine some easier means of escaping me. The door was opened to my ring by a tall handsome boy whom I suppose to have been Mr. Julian Hawthorne, and the next moment I found myself in the presence of the romancer, who entered from some room beyond. He advanced carrying his head with a heavy forward droop, and with a pace for which I decided that the word would be *pondering*. It was the pace of a bulky man of fifty, and his head was that beautiful head we all know from the many pictures of it. But Hawthorne's *look* was different from that of any picture of him that I have seen. It was sombre and brooding, as the look of such a poet should have been, it was the look of a man who had dealt faithfully and therefore sorrowfully with that problem of evil which forever attracted, forever evaded Hawthorne. It was by no means troubled, it was full of a dark repose. Others who knew him better and saw him oftener were familiar with other aspects, and I remember that one night at Longfellow's table, when one of the guests happened to

speak of the photograph of Hawthorne which hung in a corner of the room, Lowell said, after a glance at it, "Yes, it's good, but it hasn't his fine *accipitral* look"

In the face that confronted me however, there was nothing of keen alertness, but only a sort of quiet, patient intelligence, for which I seek the right word in vain. It was a very regular face, with beautiful eyes, the mustache, still entirely dark, was dense over the fine mouth. Hawthorne was dressed in black, and he had a certain effect which I remember, of seeming to have on a black cravat with no visible collar. He was such a man that if I had ignorantly met him anywhere I should have instantly felt him to be a personage.

I must have given him the letter myself, for I have no recollection of parting with it before, but I only remember his offering me his hand, and making me shyly and tentatively welcome. After a few moments of the demoralization which followed his hospitable attempts in me, he asked if I would not like to go up on his hill with him and sit there, where he smoked in the afternoon. He offered me a cigar, and when I said that I did not smoke, he lighted it for himself, and we climbed the hill together. At the top, where there was an outlook in the pines over the Concord meadows, we found a log, and he invited me to a place on it beside him, and at intervals of a minute or so he talked while he smoked. Heaven preserved me from the folly of trying to tell him how much his books had been to me, and though we got on rapidly at no time, I think we got on better for this interposition. He asked me about Lowell, I dare say, for I told him of my joy in meeting him and Doctor Holmes, and this seemed greatly to interest him. Perhaps because he was so lately from Europe, where our great men are always seen through the wrong end of the telescope, he appeared surprised at my devotion, and asked me whether I cared as much for meeting them as I should care for meeting the famous English authors. I professed that I cared much more, though whether this was true, I now have my doubts, and I think Hawthorne doubted it at the time. But he said nothing in comment, and went on to speak generally of Europe and America. He was curious about the West, which he seemed to fancy much more purely American, and said he would like to see some part of the country on which the shadow (or, if I must be precise, the damned shadow) of Europe had not fallen. I told him I thought the West must finally be characterized by the Germans, whom we had in great numbers, and, purely from my zeal for German poetry, I tried to allege some proofs of their present influence, though I could think of none outside of politics, which I thought they affected wholesomely. I knew Hawthorne was a Democrat, and I felt it well to touch politics lightly, but he had no more to say about the fateful election then pending than Holmes or Lowell had.

With the abrupt transition of his talk throughout, he began somehow to speak of women, and said he had never seen a woman whom he thought quite beautiful. In the same way he spoke of the New England temperament, and suggested that the apparent coldness in it was also real, and that the suppression of emotion for generations would extinguish it at last. Then he questioned me as to my knowledge of Concord, and whether I had seen any of the notable people. I answered that I had met no one but himself, as yet, but I very much wished to see Emerson and Thoreau. I did not think it needful to say that I wished to see Thoreau quite as much because he had suffered in the cause of John Brown as because he had written the books which had taken me; and when he said that Thoreau prided himself on coming nearer the heart of a pine-tree than any other human being, I could say honestly enough that I would rather come near the heart of a man. This visibly pleased him, and I saw that it did not displease him, when he asked whether I was not going to see his next neighbor Mr. Alcott, and I confessed that I had never heard of him. That surprised as well as pleased him; he remarked, with whatever intention, that there was nothing like recognition to make a man modest; and he entered into some account of the philosopher, whom I suppose I need not be much ashamed of not knowing then, since his influence was of the immediate sort that makes a man important to his townsmen while he is still strange to his countrymen.

Hawthorne descanted a little upon the landscape, and said certain of the pleasant fields below us belonged to him; but he preferred his hill-top, and if he could have his way those arable fields should be grown up to pines too. He smoked fitfully, and slowly, and in the hour that we spent together, his whiffs were of the desultory and unfinal character of

his words. When we went down, he asked me into his house again, and would have me stay to tea, for which we found the table laid. But there was a great deal of silence in it all, and at times, in spite of his shadowy kindness I felt my spirits sink. After tea, he showed me a bookcase, where there were a few books toppling about on the half-filled shelves, and said, coldly, "This is my library." I knew that men were his books, and though I myself cared for books so much, I found it fit and fine that he should care so little, or seem to care so little. Some of his own romances were among the volumes on these shelves, and when I put my finger on the *Blithedale Romance* and said that I preferred that to the others, his face lighted up, and he said that he believed the Germans liked that best too.

Upon the whole we parted such good friends that when I offered to take leave he asked me how long I was to be in Concord, and not only bade me come to see him again, but said he would give me a card to Emerson, if I liked. I answered, of course, that I should like it beyond all things, and he wrote on the back of his card something which I found, when I got away, to be, "I find this young man worthy." The quaintness, the little stiffness of it, if one pleases to call it so, was amusing to one who was not without his sense of humor, but the kindness filled me to the throat with joy. In fact, I entirely liked Hawthorne. He had been as cordial as so shy a man could show himself, and I perceived, with the repose that nothing else can give, the entire sincerity of his soul.

Nothing could have been further from the behavior of this very great man than any sort of posing, apparently, or a wish to affect me with a sense of his greatness. I saw that he was as much abashed by our encounter as I was, he was visibly shy to the point of discomfort, but in no ignoble sense was he conscious, and as nearly as he could with one so much his younger he made an absolute equality between us. My memory of him is without alloy one of the finest pleasures of my life. In my heart I paid him the same glad homage that I paid Lowell and Holmes, and he did nothing to make me think that I had overpaid him. This seems perhaps very little to say in his praise, but to my mind it is saying everything, for I have known but few great men, especially of those I met in early life, when I wished to lavish my admiration upon them, whom I have not the impression of

having left in my debt. Then, a defect of the Puritan quality, which I have found in many New-Englanders, is that, wittingly or unwittingly, they propose themselves to you as an example or if not quite this, that they surround themselves with a subtle ether of potential disapprobation, in which, at the first sign of unworthiness in you, they helplessly suffer you to gasp and perish, they have good hearts, and they would probably come to your succor out of humanity, if they knew how, but they do not know how. Hawthorne had nothing of this about him, he was no more tacitly than he was explicitly didactic. I thought him as thoroughly in keeping with his romances as Doctor Holmes had seemed with his essays and poems, and I met him as I had met the Autocrat in the supreme hour of his fame. He had just given the world the last of those incomparable works which it was to have finished from his hand, the *Marble Faun* had worthily followed, at a somewhat longer interval than usual, the *Blithedale Romance*, and the *House of Seven Gables*, and the *Scarlet Letter*, and had perhaps carried his name higher than all the rest, and certainly farther. Everybody was reading it, and more or less bewailing its indefinite close, but yielding him that full honor and praise which a writer can hope for but once in his life. Nobody dreamed that thereafter only precious fragments, sketches more or less faltering, though all with the divine touch in them, were further to enrich a legacy which in its kind is the finest the race has received from any mind. As I have said, we are always finding new Hawthornes, but the illusion soon wears away, and then we perceive that they were not Hawthornes at all, that he had some peculiar difference from them, which, by-and-by, we shall no doubt consent must be his difference from all men evermore.

I am painfully aware that I have not summoned before the reader the image of the man as it has always stood in my memory, and I feel a sort of shame for my failure. He was so altogether simple that it seems as if it would be easy to do so, but perhaps a spirit from the other world would be simple too, and yet would no more stand at parley, or consent to be sketched, than Hawthorne. In fact, he was always more or less merging into the shadow, which was in a few years wholly to close over him, there was nothing uncanny in his presence, there was nothing even unwilling, but he had that apparitional quality of some great minds which kept Shakespeare largely

unknown to those who thought themselves his intimates, and has at last left him a sort of doubt. There was nothing teasing or wilfully elusive in Hawthorne's impalpability, such as I afterwards felt in Thoreau, if he was not there to your touch, it was

no fault of his; it was because your touch was dull, and wanted the use of contact with such natures. The hand passes through the veridical phantom without a sense of its presence, but the phantom is none the less veridical for all that.

FROM

*First Impressions of Literary New York*⁶²

It was by boat that I arrived from Boston, on an August morning of 1860, which was probably of the same quality as an August morning of 1900. I used not to mind the weather much in those days, it was hot or it was cold, it was wet or it was dry, but it was not my affair, and I suppose that I sweltered about the strange city, with no sense of anything very personal in the temperature, until nightfall. What I remember is being high up in a hotel long since laid low, listening in the summer dark, after the long day was done, to the Niagara roar of the omnibuses whose tide then swept Broadway from curb to curb, for all the miles of its length. At that hour the other city noises were stilled, or lost in this vaster volume of sound, which seemed to fill the whole night. It had a solemnity which the modern comer to New York will hardly imagine, for that tide of omnibuses has long since ebbed away, and has left the air to the strident discords of the elevated trains and the irregular alarum of the grip-car gongs, which blend to no such harmonious thunder as rose from the procession of those ponderous and innumerable vans. There was a sort of inner quiet in the sound, and when I chose I slept off to it, and woke to it in the morning refreshed and strengthened to explore the literary situation in the metropolis.

I

Not that I think I left this to the second day. Very probably I lost no time in going to the office of the *Saturday Press*, as soon as I had my breakfast after arriving, and I have a dim impression of anticipating the earliest of the bohemians, whose gay theory of life obliged them to a good many hardships in lying down early in the morning, and rising up late in the day.

If it was the office-boy who bore me company during the first hour of my visit, by-and-by the editors and contributors actually began to come in. I would not be very specific about them if I could, for since that Bohemia has faded from the map of the republic of letters, it has grown more and more difficult to trace its citizenship to any certain writer. There are some living who knew the bohemians and even loved them, but there are increasingly few who were of them, even in the fond retrospect of youthful follies and errors. It was in fact but a sickly colony transplanted from the mother asphalt of Paris, and never really striking root in the pavements of New York, it was a colony of ideas, of theories, which had perhaps never had any deep root anywhere. What these ideas, these theories, were in art and in life, it would not be very easy to say, but in the *Saturday Press* they came to violent expression, not to say explosion, against all existing forms of respectability. If respectability was your *bête noire*, then you were a bohemian, and if you were in the habit of rendering yourself in prose, then you necessarily shredded your prose into very fine paragraphs of a sentence each, or of a very few words, or even of one word. I believe this fashion prevailed till very lately with some of the dramatic critics, who thought that it gave a quality of epigram to the style; and I suppose it was borrowed from the more spasmodic moments of Victor Hugo by the editor of the *Press*. He brought it back with him when he came home from one of those sojourns in Paris which possess one of the French accent rather than the French language. I long desired to write in that fashion myself, but I had not the courage.

This editor was a man of such open and avowed cynicism that he may have been, for all I know, a kindly optimist at heart; some say, however, that he had really talked himself into being what he

⁶² From Part Second of *Literary Friends and Acquaintance*. Copyright 1900 by Harper & Brothers; copyright 1928 by Mildred Howells and John Mead Howells. Reprinted by kind permission of Miss Howells.

seemed I only know that his talk, the first day I saw him, was of such a sort that if he was half as bad he would have been too bad to be. He walked up and down his room saying what lurid things he would directly do if any one accused him of respectability, so that he might disabuse the minds of all witnesses. There were four or five of his assistants and contributors listening to the dreadful threats, which did not deceive even so great innocence as mine, but I do not know whether they found it the sorry force that I did. They probably felt the fascination for him which I could not disown in spite of my inner disgust, and were watchful at the same time for the effect of his words with one who was confessedly fresh from Boston, and was full of delight in the people he had seen there. It appeared, with him to be proof of the inferiority of Boston that if you passed down Washington Street, half a dozen men in the crowd would know you were Holmes, or Lowell, or Longfellow, or Wendell Phillips, but in Broadway no one would know who you were or care to the measure of his smallest blasphemy. I have since heard this more than once urged as a signal advantage of New York for the æsthetic inhabitant, but I am not sure, yet, that it is so. The unrecognized celebrity probably has his mind quite as much upon himself as if some one pointed him out, and otherwise I cannot think that the sense of neighborhood is such a bad thing for the artist in any sort. It involves the sense of responsibility, which cannot be too constant or too keen. If it is narrow, it deepens, and this may be the secret of Boston.

II

It would not be easy to say just why the bohemian group represented New York literature to my imagination, for I certainly imitated other names with its best work, but perhaps it was because I had written for the *Saturday Press* myself, and had my pride in it, and perhaps it was because that paper really embodied the new literary life of the city. It was clever, and full of the wit that tries its teeth upon everything. It attacked all literary shams but its own, and it made itself felt and feared. The young writers throughout the country were ambitious to be seen in it and they gave their best to it, they gave literally, for the *Saturday Press* never paid in anything but hopes of paying, vaguer even than promises. It is not too much to say that it was very nearly as well for one to be accepted

by the *Press* as to be accepted by the *Atlantic*, and for the time there was no other literary comparison. To be in it was to be in the company of Fitz James O'Brien,⁶³ Fitzhugh Ludlow,⁶⁴ Mr Aldrich,⁶⁵ Mr Stedman,⁶⁶ and whoever else was liveliest in prose or loveliest in verse at that day in New York. It was a power, and although it is true that, as Henry Giles said of it, "Man cannot live by snapping turtle alone," the *Press* was very good snapping turtle. Or, it seemed so then, I should be almost afraid to test it now, for I do not like snapping-turtle so much as I once did, and I have grown nicc in my taste, and want my snapping-turtle of the very best. What is certain is that I went to the office of the *Saturday Press* in New York with much the same sort of feeling I had in going to the office of the *Atlantic Monthly* in Boston, but I came away with a very different feeling. I had found there a bitterness against Boston as great as the bitterness against respectability, and as Boston was then rapidly becoming my second country, I could not join in the scorn thought of her and said of her by the bohemians. I fancied a conspiracy among them to shock the literary pilgrim, and to mimic the precious emotions he had experienced in visiting other shrines, but I found no harm in that, for I knew just how much to be shocked, and I thought I knew better how to value certain things of the soul than they. Yet when their chief asked me how I got on with Hawthorne, and I began to say that he was very shy and I was rather shy, and the king of Bohemia took his pipe out to break in upon me with "Oh, a couple of shysters!" and the rest laughed, I was abashed all they could have wished, and was not restored to myself till one of them said that the thought of Boston made him as ugly as sin, then I began to hope again that men who took themselves so seriously as that need not be taken very seriously by me.

In fact I had heard things almost as desperately cynical in other newspaper offices before that, and I could not see what was so distinctively bohemian in these *anime prave*, these souls so balcful by their own

⁶³ Fitz James O'Brien (1828-62), prominent member of Pfaff's group, right, poet.

⁶⁴ Fitzhugh Ludlow (1836-70), author of short stories and articles, *Utterly Unholy* and the notorious book, *The Hashish Eater* (1857).

⁶⁵ Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823-1907) Boston poet, novelist, and "Boston plated" traditions.

⁶⁶ Edmund Clarence Stedman (1833-1908), poet, essayist, critic, businessman.

showing But apparently Bohemia was not a state that you could well imagine from one encounter, and since my stay in New York was to be very short, I lost no time in acquainting myself further with it. That very night I went to the beer-cellar, once very far up Broadway, where I was given to know that the bohemian nights were smoked and quaffed away. It was said, so far West as Ohio that the queen of Bohemia⁶⁷ sometimes came to Pfaff's a young girl of a sprightly gift in letters, whose name or pseudonym had made itself pretty well known at that day, and whose fate, pathetic at all times, out-tragedies almost any other in the history of letters. She was seized with hydrophobia from the bite of her dog, on a railroad train, and made a long journey home in the paroxysms of that agonizing disease, which ended in her death after she reached New York. But this was after her reign had ended, and no such black shadow was cast forward upon Pfaff's, whose name often figured in the verse and the epigrammatically paragraphed prose of the *Saturday Press*. I felt that as a contributor and at least a brevet bohemian I ought not to go home without visiting the famous place, and witnessing if I could not share the revels of my comrades. As I neither drank beer nor smoked, my part in the carousal was limited to a German pancake, which I found they had very good at Pfaff's, and to listening to the whirling words of my commensals, at the long board spread for the bohemians in a cavernous space under the pavement. There were writers for the *Saturday Press* and for *Vanity Fair* (a hopefully comic paper of that day), and some of the artists who drew for the illustrated periodicals. Nothing of their talk remains with me, but the impression remains that it was not so good talk as I had heard in Boston. At one moment of the orgy, which went but slowly for an orgy, we were joined by some belated bohemians whom the others made a great clamor over, I was given to understand they were just recovered from a fearful debauch; their locks were still damp from the wet towels used to restore them, and their eyes were very frenzied. I was presented to these types, who neither said nor did anything worthy of their awful appearance but dropped into seats at the table, and ate of the supper with an appetite that seemed poor. I stayed hoping vainly for worse things till eleven o'clock, and then I rose and took my leave

of a literary condition that had distinctly disappointed me. I do not say that it may not have been wicked and wittier than I found it, I only report what I saw and heard in bohemia on my first visit to New York, and I know that my acquaintance with it was not exhaustive. When I came the next year the *Saturday Press* was no more, and the editor and his contributors had no longer a common centre. The best of the young fellows whom I met there confessed, in a pleasant exchange of letters which we had afterwards, that he thought the pose a vain and unprofitable one, and when the *Press* was revived, after the war, it was without any of the old bohemian characteristics except that of not paying for material. It could not last long upon these terms, and again it passed away, and still waits its second palingenesis.

The editor passed away too, not long after, and the thing that he had inspired altogether ceased to be. He was a man of a certain sardonic power, and used it rather fiercely and freely, with a joy probably more apparent than real in the pain it gave. In my last knowledge of him he was much milder than when I first knew him, and I have the feeling that he too came to own before he died that man cannot live by snapping-turtle alone. He was kind to some neglected talents, and befriended them with a vigor and a zeal which he would have been the last to let you call generous. The chief of these was Walt Whitman, who, when the *Saturday Press* took it up, had as hopeless a cause with the critics on either side of the ocean as any man could have. It was not till long afterwards that his English admirers began to discover him, and to make his countrymen some noisy reproaches for ignoring him, they were wholly in the dark concerning him when the *Saturday Press*, which first stood his friend, and the young men whom the *Press* gathered about it, made him their cult. No doubt he was more valued because he was so offensive in some ways than he would have been if he had been in no way offensive, but it remains a fact that they celebrated him quite as much as was good for them. He was often at Pfaff's with them, and the night of my visit he was the chief fact of my experience. I did not know he was there till I was on my way out, for he did not sit at the table under the pavement, but at the head of one farther into the room. There, as I passed, some friendly fellow stopped me and named me to him, and I remember how he leaned back in his chair, and reached out

⁶⁷ Ada Clare, pseudonym of Jane McElheney (1836-74), notorious beauty, poet, and actress.

his great hand to me, as if he were going to give it me for good and all. He had a fine head, with a cloud of Jovian hair upon it, and a branching beard and mustache, and gentle eyes that looked most kindly into mine, and seemed to wish the liking which I instantly gave him, though we hardly passed a word, and our acquaintance was summed up in that glance and the grasp of his mighty fist upon my hand. I doubt if he had any notion who or what I was beyond the fact that I was a young poet of some sort, but he may possibly have remembered seeing my name printed after some very Hemesque verses in the *Press*. I did not meet him again for twenty years, and then I had only a moment with him when he was reading the proofs of his poems in Boston. Some years later I saw him for the first time, one day after his lecture on Lincoln, in that city when he came down from the platform to speak with some hand-shaking friends who gathered about him. Then and always he gave me the sense of a sweet and true soul, and I felt in him a spiritual dignity which I will not try to reconcile with his printing in the forefront of his book a passage from a private letter of Emerson's, though I believe he would not have seen such a thing as most other men would, or thought ill of it in another. The spiritual purity which I felt in him no less than the dignity is something that I will no more try to reconcile with what denies it in his page, but such things we may well leave to the adjustment of finer balances than we have at hand. I will make sure only of the 30

greatest benignity in the presence of the man. The apostle of the rough, the uncouth, was the gentlest person, his barbaric yawp translated into the terms of social encounter, was an address of singular quiet, delivered in a voice of winning and endearing friendliness.

As to his work itself, I suppose that I do not think it so valuable in effect as in intention. He was a liberating force, a very "imperial anarchy" in literature, but liberty is never anything but a means, and what Whitman achieved was a means and not an end, in what must be called his verse. I like his prose, if there is a difference, much better, there he is of a genial and comforting quality, very rich and cordial, such as I felt him to be when I met him in person. His verse seems to me not poetry, but the materials of poetry, like one's emotions, yet I would not misprize it, and I am glad to own that I have had moments of great pleasure in it. Some French critic quoted in the *Saturday Press* (I cannot think of his name) said the best thing of him when he said that he made you a partner of the enterprise, for that is precisely what he does, and that is what alienates and what endears in him, as you like or dislike the partnership. It is still something neighborly, brotherly, fatherly, and so I felt him to be when the benign old man looked on me and spoke to me.

* * *

1900

*A Memory that Worked Overtime*⁶⁸

Minver's brother took down from the top of the low bookshelf a small painting on panel, which he first studied in the obverse, and then turned and contemplated on the back with the same dreamy smile. "I don't see how that got *here*," he said absently.

"Well," Minver returned, "you don't expect *me* to tell you, except on the principle that any one would naturally know more about anything of yours than you would." He took it from his brother and looked at the front of it. "It isn't bad. It's pretty good!" He turned it round. "Why, it's one of old Blakey's! How did you come by it?"

"Stole it, probably," Minver's brother said, still thoughtfully. Then with an effect of recollecting, "No, come to think of it," he added, "Blakey gave it to me." The Minvers played these little comedies together, quite as much to satisfy their tenderness for each other as to give their friends pleasure. "Think you're the only printer that gets me to take his truck as a gift? He gave it to me, let's see, about ten years ago, when he was trying to make a die of it, and failed, I thought he would succeed. But it's been in my wife's room nearly ever since, and what I can't understand is what she's doing with it down here."

"Probably to make trouble for you, somehow," Minver suggested.

"No, I don't think it's *that*, quite," his brother

⁶⁸ From *Between the Dark and the Daylight*. Copyright 1907 by Harper & Brothers, copyright 1935 by Mildred Howells and John Mead Howells. Reprinted by kind permission of Miss Howells.

returned, with a false air of scrupulosity, which was part of their game with each other. He looked some more at the picture, and then he glanced at me "There's a very curious story connected with that sketch"

"Oh, well, tell it," Minver said "Tell it! I suppose I can stand it again Acton's never heard it, I believe But you needn't make a show of sparing him I *couldn't* stand that"

"I certainly haven't heard the story," I said, "and 10 if I had I would be too polite to own it"

Minver's brother looked towards the open door over his shoulder, and Minver interpreted for him "She's not coming I'll give you due warning"

"It was before we were married, but not much before, and the picture was a sort of wedding present for my wife, though Blakey made a show of giving it to me. Said he had painted it for me, because he had a prophetic soul, and felt it in his bones that I was going to want a picture of the place where I 20 first met her You see, it's the little villa her mother had taken that winter on the Viale Petrarca, just outside Florence. It was the first place I met her, but not the last."

"Don't be obvious," Minver ordered

His brother did not mind him "I thought it was mighty nice of Blakey. He was barking away, all the time he was talking, and when he wasn't coughing he was so hoarse he could hardly speak above a whisper, but he kept talking on, and wishing me happy, and 30 fending off my gratitude, while he was finding a piece of manila paper to wrap the sketch in, and then hunting for a piece of string to tie it. When he handed it to me at last, he gasped out 'I don't mind her knowing that I partly meant it as the place where *she* first met you, too. I'm not ashamed of it as a bit of color. Anyway, I sha'n't live to do anything better.'

"'Oh, yes, you will,' I came back in that lying way we think is kind with dying people. I suppose 40 it is, anyway, it turned out all right with Blakey, as he'll testify if you look him up when you go to Florence. By the way, he lives in that villa *now*."

"No?" I said. "How charming!"

Minver's brother went on: "I made up my mind to be awfully careful of that picture, and not let it out of my hand till I left it with 'her' mother, to be put among the other wedding presents that were accumulating at their house in Exeter Street. So I

held it on my lap going in by train from Lexington, where Blakey lived, and when I got out at the old Lowell Depot—North Station now—and got into the little tinkle-tinkle horse-car that took me up to where I was to get the Back Bay car— Those were the prehistoric times before trolleys, and there were odds in horse-cars We considered the blue-painted Back Bay cars very swell. You remember them?" he asked Minver

"Not when I can help it," Minver answered. "When I broke with Boston, and went to New York, I burnt my horse-cars behind me, and never wanted to know what they looked like, one from another"

"Well, as I was saying," Minver's brother went on, without regarding his impatience, "when I got into the horse-car at the depot, I rushed for a corner seat, and I put the picture, with its face next the car-end, between me and the wall, and kept my hand on it, and when I changed to the Back Bay 20 car, I did the same thing There was a florist's just there, and I couldn't resist some Mayflowers in the window, I was in that condition, you know, when flowers seemed to be made for her, and I had to take her own to her wherever I found them. I put the bunch between my knees, and kept one hand on it, while I kept my other hand on the picture at my side. I was feeling first-rate, and when General Filbert got in after we started, and stood before me hanging by a strap and talking down to me, I had the decency to propose giving him my seat, as he was about ten years older."

"Sure?" Minver asked.

"Well, say fifteen I don't pretend to be a chicken, and never did But he wouldn't hear of it. Said I had a bundle, and winked at the bunch of Mayflowers. We had such a jolly talk that I let the car carry me a block by and had to get out at Gloucester and run back to Exeter. I rang, and, when the maid came to the door, there I stood with nothing but the 30 Mayflowers in my hand."

"Good *coup de théâtre*," Minver jeered. "Cur-tain?"

His brother disdained reply, or was too much absorbed in his tale to think of any. "When the girl opened the door and I discovered my fix I burst out, 'Good Lord!' and I stuck the bunch of flowers at her, and turned and ran I suppose I must have had some notion of overtaking the car with my picture in it. But the best I could do was to let the next one over-

take me several blocks down Marlborough Street, and carry me to the little jumping off station on Westchester Park, as we used to call it in those days, at the end of the Back Bay line

"As I pushed into the railroad office, I bet myself that the picture would not be there, and, sure enough, I won"

"You were always a lucky dog," Minver said

"But the man in charge was very encouraging, and said it was sure to be turned in, and he asked me ¹⁰ what time the car had passed the corner of Gloucester Street I happened to know, and then he said, Oh yes, that conductor was a substitute, and he wouldn't be on again until morning, then he would be certain to bring the picture with him I was not to worry, for it would be all right Nothing left in the Back Bay cars was ever lost, the character of the abutters was guarantee for that, and they were practically the only passengers The conductors and the drivers were as honest as the passengers, and I ²⁰ could consider myself in the hands of friends

"He was so reassuring that I went away smiling at my fears, and promising to be round bright and early, as soon, the official suggested—the morrow being Sunday—as soon as the men and horses had had their baked beans

"Still, after dinner, I had a lurking anxiety, which I turned into a friendly impulse to go and call on Mrs Filbert, whom I really owed a bread-and-butter visit, and who, I knew, would not mind my coming ³⁰ in the evening The general, she said, had been telling her of our pleasant chat in the car, and would be glad to smoke his after-dinner cigar with me, and why wouldn't I come into the library?

"We were so very jolly together, all three, that I made light of my misadventure about the picture The general inquired about the flowers first He remembered the flowers perfectly, and hoped they were acceptable, he though he remembered the picture, too, now I mentioned it, but he would not have ⁴⁰ noticed it so much, there by my side, with my hand on it I would be sure to get it He gave several instances, personal to him and his friends, of recoveries of lost articles, it was really astonishing how careful the horse car people were, especially on the Back Bay line I would find my picture all right at the Westchester Park station in the morning, never fear

"I feared so little that I slept well, and even over-

slept, and I went to get my picture quite confidently, and I could hardly believe it had not been turned in yet, though the station master told me so The substitute conductor had not seen it, but more than likely it was at the stables, where the cleaners would have found it in the car and turned it in He was as robustly cheerful about it as ever, and offered to send an inquiry by the next car, but I said, 'Why shouldn't I go myself, and he said that was a good idea So I went, and it was well I did, for my picture was not there, and I had saved time by going It was not there, but the head man said I need not worry a mite about it, I was certain to get it sooner or later, it would be turned in, to a dead certainty We became rather confidential, and I went so far as to explain about wanting to make my inquiries very quietly on Blakey's account he would be annoyed if he heard of its loss, and it might react unfavorably on his health

"The head man said that was so, and he would tell me what I wanted to do I wanted to go to the Company's General Offices in Milk Street, and tell them about it That was where everything went as a last resort, and he would bet any money that I would see my picture there the first thing I got inside the door I thanked him with the fervor I thought he merited, and said I would go at once

"'Well,' he said, 'you don't want to go to day, you know The offices are not open Sunday And to-morrow's a holiday But you're all right You'll find your picture there, don't you have any doubts about it'

"That was my next to last Sunday supper with my wife, before she became my wife, at her mother's house, and I went to the feast with as little gayety as I suppose any young man ever carried to a supper of the kind I was told, afterwards, that my behavior up to a certain point was so suggestive either of secret crime or of secret regret, that the only question was whether they should have in the police or I should be given back my engagement ring and advised to go Luckily I ceased to bear my anguish just in time

"The fact is, I could not stand it any longer, and as soon as I was alone with her I made a clean breast of it, partially clean, that is I suppose a fellow never tells *all* to a girl, if he truly loves her" Minver's brother glanced round at us and gathered the harvest of our approving smiles "I said to her, 'I've been

having a wedding present 'Well,' she said, 'you've come as near having no use for a wedding present as anybody I know. Was having a wedding present what made you so gloomy at supper? Who gave it to you, anyway?' 'Old Blakey' 'A painting?' 'Yes—a sketch' 'What of?' This was where I qualified. I said 'Oh, just one of those Sorrento things of his' You see, if I told her it was the villa where we first met, and then said I had left it in the horse-car, she would take it as proof positive that I did not really care anything about her or I never could have forgotten it."

"You were wise as far as you went," Minver said. "Go on."

"Well, I told her the whole story circumstantially: how I had kept the sketch religiously in my lap in the train, and then held it down with my hand all the while beside me in the first horse-car, and did the same thing in the Back Bay car I changed to, and felt of it the whole time I was talking with General Filbert, and then left it there when I got out to leave the flowers at her door, when the awful fact came over me like a flash. 'Yes,' she said, 'Norah said you poked the flowers at her without a word, and she had to guess they were for me'."

"I had got my story pretty glib by this time, I had reeled it off with increasing particulars to the Westchester Park station-master, and the head man at the stables, and General Filbert, and I was so letter-perfect that I had a vision of the whole thing, especially of my talking with the general while I kept my hand on the picture—and then all was dark."

"At the end she said we must advertise for the picture. I said it would kill Blakey if he saw it; and she said: No matter, *let* it kill him; it would show him that we valued his gift, and were moving heaven and earth to find it, and, at any rate, it would kill *me* if I kept myself in suspense. I said I should not care for that, but with her sympathy I guessed I could live through the night, and I was sure I should find the thing at the Milk Street office in the morning."

"Why," said she, 'to-morrow it'll be shut!' and then I didn't really know what to say, and I agreed to drawing up an advertisement then and there, so as not to lose an instant's time after I had been at the Milk Street office on Tuesday and found the picture had not been turned in. She said I could dictate the advertisement and she would write it down, and she asked: 'Which one of his Sorrento things was it?'

You must describe it exactly, you know' That made me feel awfully, and I said I was not going to have my next-to-last Sunday evening with her spoiled by writing advertisements, and I got away, somehow, with all sorts of comforting reassurances from her. I could see that she was feigning them to encourage me.

"The next morning, I simply could not keep away from the Milk Street office, and my unreasonable impatience was rewarded by finding it at least ajar, if not open. There was the nicest kind of a young fellow there, and he said he was not officially present, but what could he do for me? Then I told him the whole story, with details I had not thought of before; and he was just as enthusiastic about my getting my picture as the Westchester Park station-master or the head man of the stables. It was morally certain to be turned in, the first thing in the morning; but he would take a description of it, and send out inquiries to all the conductors and drivers and car-cleaners, and make a special thing of it. He entered into the spirit of the affair, and I felt that I had such a friend in him that I confided a little more and hinted at the double interest I had in the picture. I didn't pretend that it was one of Blakey's Sorrento things, but I gave him a full and true description of it, with its length, breadth, and thickness, in exact measure."

Here Minver's brother stopped and lost himself in contemplation of the sketch, as he held it at arm's length.

"Well, did you get your picture?" I prompted, after a moment.

"Oh yes," he said with a quick turn towards me. "This is it. A District Messenger brought it round the first thing Tuesday morning. He brought it," Minver's brother added with a certain effectiveness, "from the florist's, where I had stopped to get those Mayflowers. I had left it there."

"You've told it very well, this time, Joe," Minver said. "But Acton here is waiting for the psychology. Poor old Wanhope ought to be here," he added to me. He looked about for a match to light his pipe, and his brother jerked his head in the direction of the chimney.

"Box on the mantel. Yes," he sighed, "that was really something very curious. You see, I had invented the whole history of the case from the time I had got into the Back Bay car with my flowers

Absolutely nothing had happened of all I had remembered till I got out of the car. I did not put the picture beside me at the end of the car, I did not keep my hand on it while I talked with General Filbert, I did not leave it behind me when I left the car. Nothing of the kind happened. I had already left it at the florist's, and that whole passage of experience which was so vividly and circumstantially stamped in my memory that I related it four or five times over, would have made oath to every detail of it, was pure invention, or, rather, it was something less positive—the reflex of the first half of my horse-car experience, when I really did put the picture in the corner next to me, and did keep my hand on it."

"Very strange," I was beginning, but just then the door opened and Mrs. Minver came in, and I was presented.

She gave me a distracted hand, as she said to her husband: "Have you been telling the story about that picture again?" He was still holding it. "Silly!"

She was a mighty pretty woman, but full of vim and fun and sense.

"It's one of the most curious freaks of memory I every heard of, Mrs. Minver," I said.

Then she showed that she was proud of it, though she had called him silly. "Have you told," she demanded of her husband, "how oddly your memory behaved about the subject of the picture, too?"

"I have again eaten that particular piece of humble-pie," Minver's brother replied.

"Well," she said to me, "I think he was simply so possessed with the awfulness of having lost the picture that all the rest took place prophetically, but unconsciously."

"By a species of inverted presentiment?" I suggested.

"Yes," she assented, slowly, as if the formulation were new to her, but not unacceptable. "Something of that kind. I never heard of anybody else having it."

Minver had got his pipe alight, and was enjoying it. "I think Joc was simply off his nut, for the time being."

HENRY JAMES (1843-1916)

Few men in the history of American literature have been so fortunate as to inherit both wealth and the genius to use it for the enrichment of the thought and art of the nation, but the Jameses were the lucky exception. William James, the psychologist and philosopher, and his younger brother, Henry, were doubly fortunate in their inheritance, for it included not only financial independence but also a remarkable father who aided and stimulated the development of his gifted sons in every way he could.

The James who made possible the brilliant careers of the philosopher and of the novelist was also named William, an Irishman who came to Albany in 1793 with little except ability, and left, at his death in 1832, an estate valued at three million dollars. His son Henry, father of the William and Henry known to fame, rebelled against his father's Presbyterian theology and his philosophy of success. Instead of going into business, he studied theology, traveled, and after his marriage in 1840 to Mary Walsh gave all his attention to raising a family and writing books on theology which he published at his own expense. In England in 1844 he studied the French socialist, Fourier, and had a mystical experience which might be called a "conversion" to Swedenborgianism though his strongly independent interpretations were never accepted by the Swedenborg Church.

The Jameses took a house at 21 Washington Place in New York City, where their two oldest sons, William and Henry, were born in 1842 and '43. Mr. James lectured on his religious ideas and won the friendship of Emerson, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Theodore Parker, Bronson Alcott, and other prominent writers and thinkers, who visited the James home. Three other children were born inside four years, Wilkinson, Robertson, and Alice, and their father began his original experiments in education. The future novelist had already been taken to Europe at the age of one and a half years, and in 1849 Mr. James wrote to Emerson that he was thinking of returning to Europe so that the boys could "absorb French and German and get a better sensuous education than they are likely to get here." This plan was carried out in 1855, and the family spent three

years abroad, except for a brief period in 1855. Mr. James kept moving his sons around from schools and tutors in Paris, Geneva, and London and seemed to fear that they would settle upon one subject or ambition before they had sufficiently experimented with their talents and interests. William was gifted in drawing and painting, and Henry struggled to imitate him, but in this as in many other activities he was never able to keep pace with his versatile brother.

When William announced his intention of making a profession of art, his paradoxical father moved the family from Paris to Newport, Rhode Island, so that his son might study with William Hunt. But William soon had a new ambition, and in 1861 entered the Lawrence Scientific School, the first step on his road to psychology. Henry, not to be outdone, entered the Harvard Law School in 1862 after he had suffered a "physical mishap." The exact nature of this accident is still unknown but Henry later referred to it ambiguously as "an obscure hurt" and at least once as an injury to his back. It prevented him from enlisting with his brothers "Wilky" and "Rob" in the Union Army, and this depressed him, but he was no doubt easily turned from law, for he had already decided that he wanted above all else to write stories.

From 1864 to '69 the James family lived in Boston and Cambridge, favorable locations for a young writer to begin his first experiments. In 1864 Charles Eliot Norton, editor of the *North American Review*, accepted from Henry a review of Senior's *Essays on Fiction*, which appeared in the October number. It is perhaps significant that this first publication was a criticism, not a story, for no other American author of fiction ever learned his craft more deliberately and methodically. Apparently Norton liked this first critical essay, for presently Henry James was reviewing the popular novels of Miss Prescott and Mrs. Seemuller—authors of the "best sellers" of the day. Through these reviews we learn that, at this period, James liked Scott, Reade, Mérimée, Balzac, and disliked Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett. Scott was evidently a favorite, though the young critic advised Miss Prescott and Mrs. Seemuller to study Mérimée

and Balzac. He accused these sentimental lady novelists of immorality, i.e., untruthfulness to life.

Henry James published his first story, called feebly "The Story of a Year," in the March 1865 *Atlantic Monthly*. The subject was the psychological adjustments of a soldier and the girl he had left behind when he went to war, but the plot was overcrowded and poorly coordinated. The story gave little promise of his later skill. But he continued to learn while he reviewed books for Norton and for E. L. Godkin, editor of the weekly *Nation*, published in New York. He wrote essays on Arnold, Balzac, and probably other authors (all these essays have not yet been authoritatively identified). The following year he was attracted by the art and thought of George Eliot, a novelist whom he always rated high. In 1866 he admired her for her truth and understanding of character, but especially for her humanity, which, he declared, colored "all her other gifts—her humor, her morality, and her exquisite rhetoric." It was probably his admiration for George Eliot that led him to condemn French realism, though he still aspired to be the American Balzac when he met William Dean Howells later in the year.

The friendship which developed between James and Howells, six years his senior and then assistant editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, undoubtedly meant a great deal to both men. Howells had not read Balzac when they met in 1866, but he admired the depiction of Italian life in the plays of Goldoni and he could appreciate James' demand for truth in fiction. Probably his talks with James no less than the books he was reading influenced Howells in working out his own theory of realism. But apparently at this time Howells' own influence on his younger friend was romantic. At any rate, James' next two stories, "The Story of a Masterpiece" and "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes," were highly colored and impressionistic. Perhaps these experiments taught James something about finish and style, but he had not yet discovered his own particular forte.

During the first four years of his career as a professional writer of fiction and criticism James lived in New England and his attention was focused on America. Howells pronounced him "gifted enough to do better than any one else has yet done toward making us a real American novel," and this appears to have been James' own highest ambition. In going to Europe, therefore, in 1869 he was not trying to escape from his own country, as some critics have believed, but was simply attempting to complete his education. William had spent two years in travel and study abroad and Henry wanted to take his turn.

The period of 1869-75 was, as Cornelia Kelley says in *The Early Development of Henry James*, "his Wanderjahre. He went forth into the world to look, to listen, and to learn."

On the 1869 trip James visited England, Italy, and France. He later described his emotions and experiences in *The Middle Years*, but the enthusiasm for England which he expressed in this book was that of his mature years, when he completed the work. From the spontaneous ejaculations in the letters which he wrote to his family at this time we learn that he was at first depressed by London, though he soon became absorbed by his discovery of England's past, as his "passionate pilgrim" did in the story by this name which he published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1871. Italy, however, thrilled him immediately. In Rome he exclaimed, "At last—for the first time—I live!" He was also observing people as well as scenery, and fellow Americans whom he met were so unappreciative of the beauties which stirred him to exclamation that he felt disillusioned with them. From Florence he wrote his mother:

A set of people less framed to provoke national self complacency than the latter it would be hard to imagine. There is but one word to use in regard to them—vulgar, vulgar, vulgar. Their ignorance—their stingy, defiant, grudging attitude toward everything European—their perpetual reference of all things to American standard or precedent which exists only in their own unscrupulous windbags—and then our unhappy poverty of voice, of speech, and of physiognomy—these things glare at you hideously.

But he admitted that, "on the other hand, we seem a people of *character*, we seem to have energy, capacity and intellectual stuff in ample measure." These two attitudes toward Americans soon appeared in James' stories. In fact, his observations of his countrymen abroad constituted his first authentic fictional material and before long he became something of a specialist in the field of international relations of character and manners.

After spending two more years in Cambridge, James returned to Europe in the spring of 1872 to write travel sketches for the *Nation* and the *Atlantic Monthly* and to stir up new impressions. A few weeks in Paris convinced him that both the French novel and drama were moribund. He was impressed by Swiss scenery, he detested Germany, and he became an expert critic of Italy in art. Out of his increased knowledge of people and artists he wrote between 1873-74 three of his best stories to date: "Madame de Mauves," "The Madonna of the Future," and "The Passionate Pilgrim." The first is a story of French and American morality, the second

of an artist who wasted his life preparing to paint a masterpiece, and the third of an American who inherited an estate in England but was denied his patrimony when he arrived to claim it. The latter story has often been cited as evidence of James' own homesickness for the culture of an old and aristocratic nation, but a close reading will reveal that he was as critical of English as of American mind and character. He was interested in dramatic contrasts rather than polemics of superiority.

Henry James' own attitudes, however, were becoming increasingly antinationalistic and cosmopolitan. This was undoubtedly one factor in his major decision in 1875 to live in Europe, a decision which has probably caused more biographical and critical discussion in America than any other action of his life. Even in his own family there was hostility toward his self-expatriation. William never seemed to understand why his brother needed to live abroad in order to become a writer of fiction. And in general the nationalistic critics have regarded Henry James' "deracination" as a tragic mistake. Van Wyck Brooks based his biography, *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* (1925), on the thesis that the novelist thwarted his own genius by alienating himself from his own country: "In this alien world [Europe], with which his relations were so tenuous, he drifted further and further from life itself." Five years later Parrington, in his *Main Currents*, declared in discussing James that "It is not well for the artist to turn cosmopolitan, for the flavor of the fruit comes from the soil and sunshine of its native hills." Edith Wharton, no rabid nationalist but an intimate friend of James and a disciple of his art, asserted in her autobiography, *A Backward Glance* (1934), that he left America because "he was never really happy or at home there," and he found that he could work better in Europe. Mrs. Wharton added that "Henry James was essentially a novelist of manners, and the manners he was qualified by nature and situation to observe were those of the little vanishing group of people among whom he grew up, or their more picturesque prototypes in older societies."

After he made his momentous decision, James went to live in Paris, where he made the acquaintance first of Turgenev, who introduced him to Flaubert. He became intimate with Renan and with Daudet. He was also acquainted with Zola and Maupassant. Though he found living in Paris interesting and pleasant, eventually he settled in London. In 1877, after seven weeks in Italy, he wrote to his family, "I have just come back, and am on my way to London, whither I gravitate as toward

the place in the world in which, on the whole, I feel most at home." The following year he wrote to William, who had apparently suggested his returning to America to live in Washington, "I know what I am about, and I have always my eyes on my native land."

Evidently he did know what he was about, for in the next few years James published the following books: *Roderick Hudson* (1875-76), *The American* (1877), *Daisy Miller* (1878-79), *Hawthorne* (1879), *Washington Square* (1880-81), *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). *Roderick Hudson* was Henry James' first important novel and it reveals the kind of material which he could handle successfully. *Roderick Hudson* is a young Boston sculptor who is taken to Europe by a rich young protégé, Rowland Mallet, with the hope that Europe will develop his genius. But the result is that Europe destroys Roderick's creativeness and brings to the surface his innate weak character. A central situation in the novel is the relationship between Rowland and Roderick. Probably the author sympathized with both, with Rowland the passive spectator of life, and with the artist that Roderick might have been. James was himself still uncertain of his own artistic strength, but there are some indications in the story that he identified himself more with the vicarious participator in life, Rowland. *Roderick Hudson* is not one of James' great novels, but it is a good introduction to the subjectivity of his stories—his projection of his own fears, problems, and ambitions into imaginative creations.

These books of the 1870's also confirm the duality of American character which James had observed in the letter to his mother written in Florence. Newman, the retired millionaire in *The American*, goes to Europe to find the best in life. With the crude forthrightness which had won him success in American business he attempts to woo and marry a charming girl of one of the oldest houses in France, only to find himself thwarted by the treachery of her aristocratic family. His strength of character is revealed when revenge within his grasp, he chooses acquiescence and renunciation. *Daisy Miller*, too, treats this duality in another way, but with a subtlety which misled many American readers when the story first appeared and aroused sufficient controversy to carry this work into the "best seller" class, a success which the author never repeated. Daisy's instinctive and unconventional conduct shocks a fastidious American who reminds one of James himself, but her complete innocence and sincerity are revealed after her death, and her innocence far outweighs her lack of decorum.

Many contemporary readers, however, thought *Daisy Miller* was a satire on American girls

In his biography of Hawthorne, still a valuable critical study, James continued to explore the contrasts between America and Europe "For myself," he says, "as I turn the pages of his journals I seem to see the image of the crude and simple society in which he lived I use the epithets, of course, not invidiously, but descriptively" James enumerates the "items of high civilization" absent

No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, no manors, nor old country houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages, nor ruined ruins no literature, no novels, no museums

But he adds that "The American knows that a good deal remains," and James is not unappreciative of the strictly native qualities which produced so indigenous a literary phenomenon as Hawthorne

In *Washington Square* (1881), and later in *The Bostonians* (1886), James attempted to use American materials, having lived as a youth in New York and a young man in Boston, but his genres and scenes can hardly be called typical—though the relatives of one old lady in Boston thought the book caricatured her In 1881, however, James achieved his first major success in *The Portrait of a Lady*, another story of an incorruptible American pitted against morally decadent Europeans In the beginning of the novel Isabel Archer is immature, but suffering develops in her poise, tolerance, and wisdom In the crisis she is one of those Americans who has "character, energy, capacity and intellectual stuff in ample measure"

A considerable part of the years 1881-83 James spent in the United States, first on a visit in the winter of '81-'82, during which time his mother died, and he returned again in the following December to be with his dying father After these severe personal losses he did not revisit his native land again for twenty years Back in London, he published a collected edition of his novels and tales in fourteen volumes (1883) This edition serves as a convenient milestone in James' literary progress, for he was about to begin new experiments He himself seems to have been conscious of the passing of an epoch in his life, for he began keeping a notebook on his trip to America in 1881, and during the next few years felt a compulsion to "sum up" his experiences These notebooks, used by Matthiessen in *Henry James The Major Phase*, indicate how completely the novelist was now living for his art "Not

at any point in his 'summing up'" says Matthiessen, "is there a sign of a major intellectual or emotional event, or of any intense human relationship, save in the moving pages which describe the death of his mother" His whole desire was

To live in the world of creation—to get into it and stay in it—to frequent it and haunt it—to think intensely and fruitfully—to woo combinations and inspirations into being by a depth and continuity of attention and meditation—this is the only thing

From 1889 to '95 James tried passionately to write dramas, but none of his plays were successful, and after he was hissed from the stage in London at the first night performance of *Guy Domville* he gave up his theatrical ambitions Some critics have thought that James' fiction gained in scenic detail and characterization from his interlude with the drama, but actually he denuded his novel increasingly of scenic detail until eventually he was using the equivalent of stage props only, and his characters were revealing themselves, as on the stage, by what they say and do In the later novels, in fact, they do little, they talk a great deal, they cerebrate constantly

His tales of the unappreciated or misunderstood literary and artistic genius also belong to the dramatic years "The Figure in the Carpet" and "The Next Time" came soon after the failure of *Guy Domville* To the 1890-1900 decade belong also ten of the eighteen "ghostly tales" that he wrote, including that perennially controversial work, "The Turn of the Screw," which the critics cannot agree to classify definitely as either a story of the supernatural or a psychiatric study

Matthiessen thinks that 1895 was the turning point in James' career Earlier critics agree, too, that a great change took place in his writing about this time, though most of them have thought it a degeneration into obscurity and an almost pathological subtlety Even William James protested against his brother's later style, demanding brutally in 1907, "Say it out, for God's sake and have done with it" But recent critics have reversed this interpretation Matthiessen calls the period of *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904) James' "major phase" Clifton Fadiman says that "those who circ passionately for our English speech find in the precision, the exquisiteness, the close workmanship of James' prose a relief from the careless, uncleanly, and hyperthyroid jargon which currently passes muster for sound writing" It was in the later novels and stories that James strove hardest for precision and nuance

The style had to be subtle and complex because he was attempting with increasing intensity to explore the depths of both the conscious and unconscious mind "Seen in the light of what Freud has taught us," Fadiman comments, "James suddenly demonstrates an extraordinary perception of the hidden and even sinister drives of men and women." Thus the later critics link James with Joyce, Proust, and Mann—with the great modern novelists.

The ironical story in *The Wings of the Dove* indicates this modernity, a psychiatric treatment of love, selfishness, and awakened shame. *The Ambassadors*, too, is "modern" in its emphasis on the fulness of experience. Strether, who goes to Paris to rescue a young New Englander from an affair with a married woman, finds the young man much improved by the *liaison* and himself stays in Paris, now advising the young man.

Live all you can, it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that what *have* you had?

This theme reappears time after time in the later stories, as in "The Beast in the Jungle" (1903), the story of a man who wasted his life waiting for something marvelous to happen to him, and "The Jolly Corner" (1909), the account of an expatriate like James who comes back to his old home and meets the ghost of the person he might have been if he had not gone abroad to live. In both these short stories there is also a faithful woman who spends her life in sterile waiting for the man to settle his fate.

It is easy to see in these stories a ghost of James himself. *The Golden Bowl* is less obviously subjective, though equally modern in its psychology. It is perhaps the most "patterned" of all James' major novels, elaborately symmetrical in structure and highly symbolical in style. The plot is a quadrangle between father, daughter, and their ill-chosen mates. The chief point of the story is the unspoken understanding—a marriage of minds—between father and daughter.

In 1904 James made a ten-month visit to America after having lived abroad for nearly twenty years. He traveled to California and to Florida, and his discovery of the scenery and life of his own country stirred him almost as deeply as Italy had on that memorable trip thirty-five years earlier. Part of these belated observations he presented in 1907 in *The American Scene*, a book of sketches neglected until its republication in 1946 with a valuable introduction by W. H. Auden. James intended to cover his trip to the West in a separate book, which was never

published. In reviewing the Auden edition of *The American Scene* Edmund Wilson said that the book shows "an incisiveness, a comprehensiveness, a grasp of political and economic factors, that one might not have expected of James returning to Big Business America." Other critics, however, continued to find this book overly fastidious in style and thought.

In 1907 also appeared the New York edition of *The Novels and Stories of Henry James*, in twenty-four volumes—posthumously increased to twenty-six with the addition of his two unfinished works. James carefully prepared the text himself, revising his stories as usual, explaining his purposes and literary theories in a preface for each volume. Though these prefaces were written in old age, they are singularly consistent with the theories he first expressed in book reviews (which need to be collected and republished). Indeed, in these final prefaces he drew extensively upon his reviews and notebooks.

One proof of the perennial vitality of the literary genius of Henry James is the fact that he continued to experiment (though the experiments also reveal his increasing dissatisfaction with twentieth-century civilization). Frustration often leads to fantasy, and *The Sense of the Past* (published, like *The Ivory Tower*, posthumously in 1917) is a time-fantasy. Ralph Pendrel travels back to the early nineteenth century (about 1820, i.e., to the past of James' father and grandfather), and changes places with a young American who looks to the future, just as Ralph looks to the past. This Wellsian device gave James an opportunity for ironic contrast but showed his inability to deal imaginatively with the impressions of his travels in 1904. *The Ivory Tower* also indicates his old-age interest in the younger generation, but he was never able to finish the story. He tried in vain to recapture the confident mood of his productive years. In a note he prayed: "Let me fumble it gently and patiently out—with fever and fidget laid to rest—as in the old enchanted months." But the "old enchanted months" were gone forever.

When war broke out between England and Germany in 1914 Henry James was tragically shocked. He wrote in a letter:

The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness, by the wanton hat of these two aristocrats is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be with whatever abatement, gradually bettering, that to have to take it all now for what the treacherous years were all the while really making for and meaning is too tragic for words.

This tortured utterance gives the key to much of James' modern significance, for in retrospect it is

easy to see in the pathetic futility of many of his prim characters the author's own foreboding of a vanishing civilization. His autobiographical books, *A Small Boy and Others* (1913), *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914), and *The Middle Years* (1917), reveal his desire for order and decency in life, but in the social and political world in which he lived these were deteriorating. Looking back on Western civilization after two world wars, we now recognize the pent up violence that was straining for release in social upheaval. Henry James, with his clinical interest in human motives, was unconsciously a social prophet, as Stephen Spender has brilliantly demonstrated in *The Destructive Element* (in which James is the central literary figure). The novelist, of all artists, deals most intimately with human nature, and James, through his endless probing into the motives of such people as he knew, disclosed the stresses and the weaknesses of the social structure of his generation.

Probably every reader of Henry James has definite impressions of his personality after reading his stories, but it is not likely that two readers have quite the same impressions. Indeed, even James' friends and contemporaries give conflicting testimony. They do not agree on why he found life in England more congenial than in America, and it is not certain he himself knew. Stories like "The Jolly Corner" suggest that he may have struggled to answer this question to himself. In recent years psychological critics have attempted to trace the origins of James' fictional motifs and his highly individualized style to

certain frustrations of his life, such as his inability to rival his older brother's intellectual brilliancy, and possibly the mysterious injury which kept him from participating in the Civil War with his younger brothers—thus giving him a feeling of shirking his responsibility. His closest friends understood that his dignified bearing and meticulous manners cloaked an inner insecurity. William James, despite a certain intellectual gulf between himself and the novelist, deeply loved his younger brother and probably, as one of the foremost psychologists of his generation understood Henry's character and personality better than anyone else. After visiting Henry in London in 1889, William wrote back to his wife in America this acute observation:

Harry is as nice and simple and amiable as he can be. He has covered himself like some marine crustacean, with all sorts of maternal growths, rich sea weeds and rigid barnacles and things, and lives hidden in the midst of his strange heavy alien manners and customs, but these are all but "protective resemblances," under which the same dear old, good, innocent and at bottom very powerless feeling Harry remains, caring for little but his writing, and full of dutifulness and affection for all gentle things.¹

Until a future biographer brings forth a more convincing explanation, this must stand as the best clue to what Henry James was really like behind his ambassadorial dignity and his "alien manners and customs."

¹ From *The Letters of William James* by Henry James. Copyright 1920 by Henry James. Reprinted by permission of Paul R. Reynolds & Son.

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*A Landscape Painter*¹

Do you remember how, a dozen years ago, a number of our friends were startled by the report of the rupture of young Locksley's engagement with Miss Leary? This event made some noise in its day. Both parties possessed certain claims to distinction. Locksley in his wealth, which was believed to be enormous, and the young lady in her beauty, which was in truth very great. I used to hear that her lover was fond of comparing her to the Venus of Milo; and, indeed, if you can imagine the mutilated goddess with her full complement of limbs, dressed out by Madame de Crinoline, and engaged in small talk beneath the drawing-room chandelier, you may obtain a vague notion of Miss Josephine Leary. Locksley, you remember, was rather a short man, dark, and not particularly good-looking, and when he walked about with his betrothed, it was half a matter of surprise that he should have ventured to propose to a young lady of such heroic proportions. Miss Leary had the gray eyes and auburn hair which I have always assigned to the famous statue. The one defect in her face, in spite of an expression of great candor and sweetness, was a certain lack of animation. What it was besides her beauty that attracted Locksley I never discovered perhaps, since his attachment was so short-lived, it was her beauty alone. I say that his attachment was of brief duration, because the rupture was understood to have come from him. Both he and Miss Leary very wisely held their tongues on the

matter, but among their friends and enemies it of course received a hundred explanations. That most popular with Locksley's well-wishers was that he had backed out (these events are discussed, you know, in fashionable circles very much as an expected prize-fight which has miscarried is canvassed in reunions of another kind) only on flagrant evidence of the lady's—what, faithlessness?—on overwhelming proof of the most mercenary spirit on the part of Miss Leary. You see, our friend was held capable of doing battle for an "idea." It must be owned that this was a novel charge, but, for myself, having long known Mrs. Leary, the mother, who was a widow with four daughters, to be an inveterate old screw, I took the liberty of accrediting the existence of a similar propensity in her eldest born. I suppose that the young lady's family had, on their own side, a very plausible version of their disappointment. It was, however, soon made up to them by Josephine's marriage with a gentleman of expectations very nearly as brilliant as those of her old suitor. And what was *his* compensation? That is precisely my story.

Locksley disappeared, as you will remember, from public view. The events above alluded to happened in March. On calling at his lodgings in April, I was told he had gone to the "country." But towards the last of May I met him. He told me that he was on the look-out for a quiet, unfrequented place on the seashore, where he might rusticate and sketch. He was looking very poorly. I suggested Newport, and I remember he hardly had the energy to smile at the simple joke. We parted without my having

¹ Published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1866, and included in vol. II of *Stories Revived*, 1885; reprinted in *A Landscape Painter and Other Tales*, 1919. This story is one of James' best in his "early manner."

been able to satisfy him, and for a very long time I quite lost sight of him. He died seven years ago, at the age of thirty-five. For five years, accordingly, he managed to shield his life from the eyes of men. Through circumstances which I need not detail, a large portion of his personal property has come into my hands. You will remember that he was a man of what are called elegant tastes—that is, he was seriously interested in arts and letters. He wrote some very bad poetry, but he produced a number of remarkable paintings. He left a mass of papers on all subjects, few of which are adapted to be generally interesting. A portion of them, however, I highly prize,—that which constitutes his private diary. It extends from his twenty-fifth to his thirtieth year, at which period it breaks off suddenly. If you will come to my house I will show you such of his pictures and sketches as I possess and, I trust, convert you to my opinion that he had in him the stuff of a great painter. Meanwhile I will place before you the last 20 hundred pages of his diary, as an answer to your inquiry regarding the ultimate view taken by the great Nemesis of his treatment of Miss Leary,—his scorn of the magnificent Venus Victoria. The recent decease of the one person who had a voice paramount to mine in the disposal of Locksley's effects enables me to act without reserve.

Cragthorpe, June 9th—I have been sitting some minutes, pen in hand, pondering whether on this 30 new earth, beneath this new sky, I had better resume these occasional records of my idleness. I think I will at all events make the experiment. If we fail, as Lady Macbeth remarks, we fail.² I find my entries have been longest when my life has been duller. I doubt not, therefore, that, once launched into the monotony of village life, I shall sit scribbling from morning till night. If nothing happens—But my prophetic soul tells me that something will happen. I am determined that something shall,—if it be 40 nothing else than that I paint a picture.

When I came up to bed half an hour ago, I was deadily sleepy. Now, after looking out of the window a little while, my brain is strong and clear, and I feel as if I could write till morning. But, unfortunately, I have nothing to write about. And then, if I expect to rise early, I must turn in betimes. The whole village is asleep, godless metropolitan that I am! The

lamps on the square without flicker in the wind, there is nothing abroad but the blue darkness and the smell of the rising tide. I have spent the whole day on my legs, trudging from one side of the peninsula to the other. What a trump is old Mrs. M——, to have thought of this place! I must write her a letter of passionate thanks. Never before, it seems to me, have I known pure coast scenery. Never before have I relished the beauties of wave, rock, and cloud. I am filled with a sensuous ecstasy at the unparalleled life, light, and transparency of the air. I am stricken mute with reverent admiration at the stupendous resources possessed by the ocean in the way of color and sound, and as yet, I suppose, I have not seen half of them. I came in to supper hungry, weary, footsore, sun-burnt, dirty,—happier, in short, than I have been for a twelvemonth. And now for the victories of the brush!

June 11th—Another day afoot and also afloat. I resolved this morning to leave this abominable little tavern. I can't stand my feather-bed another night. I determined to find some other prospect than the town pump and the "drug store." I questioned my host, after breakfast, as to the possibility of getting lodgings in any of the outlying farms and cottages. But my host either did not or would not know anything about the matter. So I resolved to wander forth and seek my fortune,—to roam inquisitive through the neighborhood, and appeal to the indigenous sentiment of hospitality. But never did I see a folk so devoid of this amiable quality. By dinner-time I had given up in despair. After dinner I strolled down to the harbor, which is close at hand. The brightness and brookiness of the water tempted me to hire a boat and resume my explorations. I procured an old tub, with a short stump of a mast, which, being planted quite in the centre, gave the craft much the appearance of an inverted mushroom. I made for 40 what I took to be, and what is, an island, lying long and low, some three or four miles, over against the town. I sailed for half an hour directly before the wind, and at last found myself aground on the shelving beach of a quiet little cove. Such a little cove! So bright, so still, so warm, so remote from the town, which lay off in the distance, white and semicircular! I leaped ashore, and dropped my anchor. Before me rose a steep cliff, crowned with an old ruined fort or tower. I made my way up, and about to the land-

² Cf. *Macbeth*, I v, 4

ward entrance. The fort is a hollow old shell. Looking upward from the beach, you see the harmless blue sky through the gaping loopholes. Its interior is choked with rocks and brambles, and masses of fallen masonry. I scrambled up to the parapet, and obtained a noble sea-view. Beyond the broad bay I saw miniature town and country mapped out before me, and on the other hand, I saw the infinite Atlantic,—over which, by the by, all the pretty things are brought from Paris. I spent the whole afternoon in wandering hither and thither over the hills that encircle the little cove in which I had landed, heedless of the minutes and my steps, watching the sailing clouds and the cloudy sails on the horizon, listening to the musical attrition of the tidal pebbles, killing innocuous suckers. The only particular sensation I remember was that of being ten years old again, together with a general impression of Saturday afternoon, of the liberty to go in wading or even swimming, and of the prospect of lumping home in the dusk with a wondrous story of having *almost* caught a turtle. When I returned, I found—but I know very well what I found, and I need hardly repeat it here for my mortification. Heaven knows I never was a practical character. What thought I about the tide? There lay the old tub, high and dry, with the rusty anchor protruding from the flat green stones and the shallow puddles left by the receding wave. Moving the boat an inch, much more a dozen yards, was quite beyond my strength. I slowly reascended the cliff, to see if from its summit any help was discernible. None was within sight; and I was about to go down again in profound dejection, when I saw a trim little sailboat shoot out from behind a neighboring bluff, and advance along the shore. I quickened pace. On reaching the beach, I found the newcomer standing out about a hundred yards. The man at the helm appeared to regard me with some interest. With a mute prayer that his feeling might be akin to compassion, I invited him by voice and gesture to make for a little point of rocks a short distance above us, where I proceeded to join him. I told him my story, and he readily took me aboard. He was a civil old gentleman, of the seafaring sort, who appeared to be cruising about in the evening breeze for his pleasure. On landing, I visited the proprietor of my old tub, related my misadventure, and offered to pay damages, if the boat should turn out in the morning to have sustained any. Meanwhile, I suppose, it is

held secure against the next tidal revolution, however insidious.—But for my old gentleman I have decidedly picked up an acquaintance, if not made a friend. I gave him a very good cigar, and before we reached home we had become thoroughly intimate. In exchange for my cigar, he gave me his name, and there was that in his tone which seemed to imply that I had by no means the worst of the bargain. His name is Richard Blunt, “though most people,” he added, “call me Captain, for short.” He then proceeded to inquire my own titles and pretensions. I told him no lies, but I told him only half the truth, and if he chooses to indulge mentally in any romantic understatement, why, he is welcome, and bless his simple heart! The fact is, that I have broken with the past. I have decided, coolly and calmly, as I believe, that it is necessary to my success, or, at any rate, to my happiness, to abjure for a while my conventional self, and to assume a simple, natural character. How can a man be simple and natural who is known to have a hundred thousand a year? That is the supreme curse. It’s bad enough to have it, to be known to have it, to be known only because you have it, is most damnable. I suppose I am too proud to be successfully rich. Let me see how poverty will serve my turn. I have taken a fresh start. I have determined to stand upon my own merits. If they fail me, I shall fall back upon my millions; but with God’s help I will test them, and see what kind of stuff I am made of. To be young, to be strong, to be poor,—such, in this blessed nineteenth century, is the great basis of solid success. I have resolved to take at least one brief draught from the pure fountains of inspiration of my time. I replied to the Captain with such reservations as a brief survey of these principles dictated. What a luxury to pass in a poor man’s mind for his brother! I begin to respect myself. Thus much the Captain knows, that I am an educated man, with a taste for painting, that I have come hither for the purpose of cultivating this taste by the study of coast scenery, and for my health. I have reason to believe, moreover, that he suspects me of limited means and of being a good deal of an economist. Amen! *Vogue la galère!*³ But the point of my story is in his very hospitable offer of lodgings. I had been telling him of my ill success of the morning in the pursuit of the same. He is an odd union of the gentleman of the old school and the old-fashioned, hot-headed

³ “Come what may!”

merchant captain I suppose that certain traits in these characters are readily convertible

"Young man," said he, after taking several meditative puffs of his cigar, "I don't see the point of your living in a tavern, when there are folks about you with more house room than they know what to do with. A tavern is only half a house, just as one of these new-fashioned screw-propellers is only half a ship. Suppose you walk round and take a look at my place. I own quite a respectable house over yonder to the left of the town. Do you see that old wharf with the tumble-down warehouses, and the long row of elms behind it? I live right in the midst of the elms. We have the dearest little garden in the world, stretching down to the water's edge. It's all as quiet as anything can be, short of a graveyard. The back windows, you know, overlook the harbor, and you can see twenty miles up the bay, and fifty miles out to sea. You can paint to yourself there the livelong day, with no more fear of intrusion than if you were out yonder at the light ship. There's no one but myself and my daughter, who's a perfect lady, Sir. She teaches music in a young ladies' school. You see, money's an object, as they say. We have never taken boarders yet, because none came in our track, but I guess we can learn the ways. I suppose you've boarded before, you can put us up to a thing or two."

There was something so kindly and honest in the old man's weather-beaten face, something so friendly in his address, that I forthwith struck a bargain with him, subject to his daughter's approval. I am to have her answer to-morrow. This same daughter strikes me as rather a dark spot in the picture. Teacher in a young ladies' school,—probably the establishment of which Mrs. M—— spoke to me. I suppose she's over thirty. I think I know the species.

June 12th, A.M.—I have really nothing to do but to scribble "Barkis is willing."⁴ Captain Blunt brought me word this morning that his daughter smiles propitiously. I am to report this evening, but I shall send my slender baggage in an hour or two.

P.M.—Here I am, housed. The house is less than a mile from the inn, and reached by a very pleasant road, skirting the harbor. At about six o'clock I presented myself. Captain Blunt had described the place. A very civil old negress admitted me and ushered me into the garden, where I found my friends water-

ing their flowers. The old man was in his house coat and slippers. He gave me a cordial welcome. There is something delightfully easy in his manners,—and in Miss Blunt's, too, for that matter. She received me very nicely. The late Mrs. Blunt was probably a well-bred woman. As for Miss Blunt's being thirty, she is about twenty-four. She wore a fresh white dress, with a violet ribbon at her neck, and a rosebud in her button-hole,—or whatever corresponds thereto on the feminine bosom. I thought I discerned in this costume a vague intention of courtesy, of deference, of celebrating my arrival. I don't believe Miss Blunt wears white muslin every day. She shook hands with me, and made me a very frank little speech about her hospitality. "We have never had any inmates before," said she, "and we are, consequently, new to the business. I don't know what you expect. I hope you don't expect a great deal. You must ask for anything you want. If we can give it, we shall be very glad to do so, if we can't, I give you warning that we shall refuse outright." Bravo, Miss Blunt! The best of it is, that she is decidedly beautiful,—and in the grand manner tall, and rather plump. What is the orthodox description of a pretty girl?—white and red? Miss Blunt is not a pretty girl, she is a handsome woman. She leaves an impression of black and red, that is, she is a florid brunette. She has a great deal of wavy black hair, which encircles her head like a dusky glory, a smoky halo. Her eyebrows, too, are black, but her eyes themselves are of a rich blue gray, the color of those slate cliffs which I saw yesterday, weltering under the tide. Her mouth, however, is her strong point. It is very large, and contains the finest row of teeth in all this weary world. Her smile is eminently intelligent. Her chin is full, and somewhat heavy. All this is a tolerable catalogue, but no picture. I have been tormenting my brain to discover whether it was her coloring or her form that impressed me most. Fruitless speculation! Seriously, I think it was neither, it was her movement. She walks a queen. It was the conscious poise of her head, the unconscious "hang" of her arms, the careless grace and dignity with which she lingered along the garden path, smelling a red red rose! She has very little to say, apparently, but when she speaks, it is to the point and if the point suggests it, with a very sweet smile. Indeed, if she is not talkative, it is not from timidity. Is it from indifference? Time will elucidate this, as well as other matters. I cling to the hypothesis that she is amiable.

⁴ Cf. Charles Dickens *David Copperfield*, Chapter 5.

She is, moreover, intelligent; she is probably quite reserved, and she is possibly very proud. She is, in short, a woman of character. There you are, Miss Blunt, at full length,—emphatically the portrait of a lady. After tea, she gave us some music in the parlor. I confess that I was more taken with the picture of the dusky little room, lighted by the single candle on the piano, and by the *effect* of Miss Blunt's performance, than with its meaning. She appears to possess a very brilliant touch.

June 18th—I have now been here almost a week. I occupy two very pleasant rooms. My painting-room is a vast and rather bare apartment, with a very good southern light. I have decked it out with a few old prints and sketches, and have already grown very fond of it. When I had disposed my artistic odds and ends in as picturesque a fashion as possible, I called in my hosts. The Captain looked about silently for some moments, and then inquired hopefully if I had ever tried my hand at a ship. On learning that I had not yet got to ships, he relapsed into a deferential silence. His daughter smiled and questioned very graciously, and called everything beautiful and delightful, which rather disappointed me, as I had taken her to be a woman of some originality. She is rather a puzzle,—or is she, indeed, a very commonplace person, and the fault in me, who am forever taking women to mean a great deal more than their Maker intended? Regarding Miss Blunt I have collected a few facts. She is not twenty-four, but twenty-seven years old. She has taught music ever since she was twenty, in a large boarding-school just out of the town, where she originally got her education. Her salary in this establishment, which is, I believe, a tolerably flourishing one, and the proceeds of a few additional lessons, constitute the chief revenues of the household. But Blunt fortunately owns his house, and his needs and habits are of the simplest kind. What does he or his daughter know of the great worldly theory of necessities, the great worldly scale of pleasures? Miss Blunt's only luxuries are a subscription to the circulating library, and an occasional walk on the beach, which, like one of Miss Brontë's heroines, she paces in company with an old Newfoundland dog. I am afraid she is sadly ignorant. She reads nothing but novels. I am bound to believe, however, that she has derived from the perusal of these works a certain practical science of her own. "I read all the novels I can get," she said

yesterday, "but I only like the good ones. I do so like Zanoni,"⁵ which I have just finished." I must set her to work at some of the masters. I should like some of those fretful New-York heiresses to see how this woman lives. I wish, too, that half a dozen of *ces messieurs*⁶ of the clubs might take a peep at the present way of life of their humble servant. We breakfast at eight o'clock. Immediately afterwards Miss Blunt, in a shabby old bonnet and shawl, starts off to school. If the weather is fine, the Captain goes out a-fishing, and I am left to my own devices. Twice I have accompanied the old man. The second time I was lucky enough to catch a big bluefish, which we had for dinner. The Captain is an excellent specimen of the sturdy navigator, with his loose blue clothes, his ultra-divergent legs, his crisp white hair, and his jolly thick-skinned visage. He comes of a sea-faring English race. There is more or less of the ship's cabin in the general aspect of this antiquated house. I have heard the winds whistle about its walls, on two or three occasions, in true mid-ocean style. And then the illusion is heightened, somehow or other, by the extraordinary intensity of the light. My painting-room is a grand observatory of the clouds. I sit by the half-hour, watching them sail past my high, uncurtained windows. At the back part of the room, something tells you that they belong to an ocean sky, and there, in truth, as you draw nearer, you behold the vast, gray complement of sea. This quarter of the town is perfectly quiet. Human activity seems to have passed over it, never again to return, and to have left a kind of deposit of melancholy resignation. The streets are clean, bright, and airy; but this fact seems only to add to the intense sobriety. It implies that the unobstructed heavens are in the secret of their decline. There is something ghostly in the perpetual stillness. We frequently hear the rattling of the yards and the issuing of orders on the barks and schooners anchored out in the harbor.

June 28th—My experiment works far better than I had hoped. I am thoroughly at my ease: my peace of mind quite passeth understanding. I work diligently; I have none but pleasant thoughts. The past has almost lost its terrors. For a week now I have been out sketching daily. The Captain carries me to a certain point on the shore of the harbor. I disem-

⁵ A romance by Bulwer-Lytton, 1842.

⁶ These gentlemen.

bark and strike across the fields to a spot where I have established a kind of *rendezvous* with a particular effect of rock and shadow, which has been tolerably faithful to its appointment. Here I set up my easel, and paint till sunset. Then I retrace my steps and meet the boat. I am in every way much encouraged. The horizon of my work grows perceptibly wider. And then I am inexpressibly happy in the conviction that I am not wholly unfit for a life of (moderate) labor and (comparative) privation. I am quite in love with my poverty, if I may call it so. As why should I not? At this rate I don't spend eight hundred a year.

July 12th—We have been having a week of bad weather—constant rain, night and day. This is certainly at once the brightest and the blackest spot in New England. The skies can smile, assuredly, but how they can frown! I have been painting rather languidly, and at a great disadvantage, at my window.

Through all this pouring and pattering, Miss Blunt sallies forth to her pupils. She envelops her beautiful head in a great woollen hood, her beautiful figure in a kind of feminine mackintosh, her feet she puts into heavy clogs, and over the whole she balances a cotton umbrella. When she comes home, with the rain drops glistening on her red cheeks and her dark lashes, her cloak bespattered with mud, and her hands red with the cool damp, she is a profoundly wholesome spectacle. I never fail to make her a very low bow, for which she repays me with an extraordinary smile. This working-day side of her character is what especially pleases me in Miss Blunt. This holy working dress of loveliness and dignity sits upon her with the simplicity of an antique drapery. Little use has she for whalebones and furbelows. What a poetry there is, after all, in red hands! I kiss yours, Mademoiselle. I do so because you are self-helpful, because you earn your living, because you are honest, simple, and ignorant (for a sensible woman, that is), because you speak and act to the point, because, in short, you are so unlike—certain of your sisters.

July 16th—On Monday it cleared up generously. When I went to my window, on rising, I found sky and sea looking, for their brightness and freshness, like a clever English watercolor. The ocean is of a deep purple blue above it, the pure, bright sky looks pale, though it bends with an infinite depth over the inland horizon. Here and there on the dark breezy

water gleams the white cap of a wave, or flaps the white cloak of a fishing boat. I have been sketching sedulously, I have discovered, within a couple of miles' walk, a large, lonely pond, set in quite a grand landscape of barren rocks and grassy slopes. At one extremity is a broad outlook on the open sea, at the other, deep buried in the foliage of an apple orchard, stands an old haunted-looking farmhouse. To the west of the pond is a wide expanse of rock and grass, of beach and marsh. The sheep browse over it as upon a Highland moor. Except a few stunted firs and cedars, there is not a tree in sight. When I want shade, I seek it in the shelter of one of the great mossy boulders which upheave their scintillating shoulders to the sun, or of the long shallow dells where a tangle of blackberry bushes hedges about a sky-reflecting pool. I have encamped over against a plain, brown hillside, which, with laborious patience, I am transferring to canvas, and as we have now had the same clear sky for several days, I have almost finished quite a satisfactory little study. I go forth immediately after breakfast. Miss Blunt furnishes me with a napkin full of bread and cold meat, which at the noonday hour, in my sunny solitude, within sight of the slumbering ocean, I voraciously convey to my lips with my discolored fingers. At seven o'clock I return to tea, at which repast we each tell the story of our day's work. For poor Miss Blunt, it is day after day the same story—a wearisome round of visits to the school, and to the houses of the mayor, the parson, the butcher, the baker, whose young ladies, of course, all receive instruction on the piano. But she doesn't complain, nor, indeed, does she look very weary. When she has put on a fresh calico dress for tea, and arranged her hair anew, and with these improvements flits about with that quiet hither and thither of her gentle footsteps, preparing our evening meal, peeping into the tcapot cutting the solid loaf,—or when, sitting down on the low door-step, she reads out select scraps from the evening paper,—or else, when, tea being over, she folds her arms, (an attitude which becomes her mightily,) and, still sitting on the door-step, gossips away the evening in comfortable idleness, while her father and I indulge in the fragrant pipe, and watch the lights shining out, one by one, in different quarters of the darkling bay, at these moments she is as pretty, as cheerful, as careless as it becomes a sensible woman to be. What a pride the Captain takes in his daughter! And she, in

return, how perfect is her devotion to the old man! He is proud of her grace, of her tact, of her good sense, of her wit, such as it is. He thinks her to be the most accomplished of women. He waits upon her as if, instead of his old familiar Esther, she were a newly inducted daughter-in-law. And indeed, if I were his own son, he could not be kinder to me. They are certainly—nay, why should I not say it?—*we* are certainly a very happy little household. Will it last forever? I say *we*, because both father and daughter¹⁰ have given me a hundred assurances—he direct, and she, if I don't flatter myself, after the manner of her sex, indirect—that I am already a valued friend. It is natural enough that I should have gained their goodwill. They have received at my hands inveterate courtesy. The way to the old man's heart is through a studied consideration of his daughter. He knows, I imagine, that I admire Miss Blunt. But if I should at any time fall below the mark of ceremony, I should have an account to settle with him. All this is as it²⁰ should be. When people have to economize with the dollars and cents, they have a right to be splendid in their feelings. I have prided myself not a little on my good manners towards my hostess. That my bearing has been without reproach is, however, a fact which I do not, in any degree, set down here to my credit, for I would defy the most impertinent of men (whoever he is) to forget himself with this young lady, without leave unmistakably given. Those deep, dark eyes have a strong prohibitory force. I record the cir-³⁰cumstance simply because in future years, when my charming friend shall have become a distant shadow, it will be pleasant, in turning over these pages, to find written testimony to a number of points which I shall be apt to charge solely upon my imagination. I wonder whether Miss Blunt, in days to come, referring to the tables of her memory for some trivial matter-of-fact, some prosaic date or half-buried landmark, will also encounter this little secret of ours, as I may call it,—will decipher an old faint note to this⁴⁰ effect, overlaid with the memoranda of intervening years. Of course she will. Sentiment aside, she is a woman of an excellent memory. Whether she forgives or not I know not, but she certainly doesn't forget. Doubtless, virtue is its own reward; but there is a double satisfaction in being polite to a person on whom it *tells*. Another reason for my pleasant relations with the Captain is, that I afford him a chance to rub up his rusty old cosmopolitanism, and

trot out his little scraps of old-fashioned reading, some of which are very curious. It is a great treat for him to spin his threadbare yarns over again to a sympathetic listener. These warm July evenings, in the sweet-smelling garden, are just the proper setting for his amiable garrulities. An odd enough relation subsists between us on this point. Like many gentlemen of his calling, the Captain is harassed by an irresistible desire to romance, even on the least promising themes, and it is vastly amusing to observe how he will aascultate, as it were, his auditor's inmost mood, to ascertain whether it is prepared for the absorption of his insidious fibs. Sometimes they perish utterly in the transition: they are very pretty, I conceive, in the deep and briny well of the Captain's fancy, but they won't bear being transplanted into the shallow inland lakes of my land-bred apprehension. At other times, the auditor being in a dreamy, sentimental, and altogether unprincipled mood, he will drink the old man's salt-water by the bucketful and feel none the worse for it. Which is the worse, wilfully to tell, or wilfully to believe, a pretty little falsehood which will not hurt any one? I suppose you can't believe wilfully, you only pretend to believe. My part of the game, therefore, is certainly as bad as the Captain's. Perhaps I take kindly to his beautiful perversions of fact, because I am myself engaged in one, because I am sailing under false colors of the deepest dye. I wonder whether my friends have any suspicion of the real state of the case. How should they? I fancy, that, on the whole, I play my part pretty well. I am delighted to find it come so easy. I do not mean that I experience little difficulty in foregoing my hundred petty elegancies and luxuries,—for to these, thank Heaven, I was not so indissolubly wedded that one wholesome shock could not loosen my bonds,—but that I manage more cleverly than I expected to stifle those innumerable tacit illusions which might serve effectually to belie my character.

Sunday, July 20th.—This has been a very pleasant day for me; although in it, of course, I have done no manner of work. I had this morning a delightful *tête-à-tête* with my hostess. She had sprained her ankle, coming downstairs; and so, instead of going forth to Sunday school and to meeting, she was obliged to remain at home on the sofa. The Captain, who is of a very punctilious piety, went off alone.

When I came into the parlor, as the church bells were ringing, Miss Blunt asked me if I never went to meeting "Never when there is anything better to do at home," said I

"What is better than going to church?" she asked, with charming simplicity

She was reclining on the sofa, with her foot on a pillow, and her Bible in her lap She looked by no means afflicted at having to be absent from divine service, and, instead of answering her question, I took to the liberty of telling her so

"I am sorry to be absent," said she "You know it's my only festival in the week"

"So you look upon it as a festival," said I

"Isn't it a pleasure to meet one's acquaintance? I confess I am never deeply interested in the sermon, and I very much dislike teaching the children, but I like wearing my best bonnet, and singing in the choir, and walking part of the way home with—"

"With whom?"

"With any one who offers to walk with me"

"With Mr Johnson for instance," said I

Mr Johnson is a young lawyer in the village, who calls here once a week, and whose attentions to Miss Blunt have been remarked

"Yes," she answered, "Mr Johnson will do as an instance"

"How he will miss you!"

"I suppose he will We sing off the same book What are you laughing at? He kindly permits me to hold the book, while he stands with his hands in his pockets Last Sunday I quite lost patience 'Mr Johnson,' said I, 'do hold the book! Where are your manners?' He burst out laughing in the midst of the reading He will certainly have to hold the book to day"

"What a 'masterful soul' he is! I suppose he will call after meeting"

"Perhaps he will I hope so"

"I hope he won't," said I, roundly "I am going to sit down here and talk to you, and I wish our tête-à-tête not to be interrupted"

"Have you anything particular to say?"

"Nothing so particular as Mr Johnson, perhaps"

Miss Blunt has a very pretty affectation of being more matter-of-fact than she really is

"His rights, then," said she, "are paramount to yours"

"Ah, you admit that he has rights?"

Not at all I simply assert that you have none "I beg your pardon I have claims which I mean to enforce I have a claim upon your undivided attention, when I pay you a morning call"

"Your claim is certainly answered Have I been uncivil pray?"

"Not uncivil, perhaps, but inconsiderate You have been sighing for the company of a third person, which you can't expect me to relish"

"Why not, pray? If I, a lady, can put up with Mr Johnson's society, why shouldn't you, one of his own sex?"

"Because he is so outrageously conceited You, as a lady, or at any rate as a woman, like conceited men"

"Ah, yes, I have no doubt that I, as a woman, have all kinds of improper tastes That's an old story"

"Admit, at any rate, that our friend is conceited"

"Admit it? Why, I have said so a hundred times I have told him so"

20 "Indeed! It has come to that, then?"

"To what, pray?"

"To that critical point in the friendship of a lady and gentleman, when they bring against each other all kinds of delightful charges of moral obliquity Take care, Miss Blunt! A couple of intelligent New Englanders, of opposite sex, young, unmarried, are pretty far gone, when they begin morally to reprobate each other So you told Mr Johnson that he is conceited? And I suppose you added, that he was also dreadful satirical and skeptical? What was his rejoinder? Let me see Did he ever tell you that you were a little bit affected?"

"No he left that for you to say, in this very ingenious manner Thank you, sir"

"He left it for me to deny, which is a great deal prettier Do you think the manner ingenious?"

"I think the matter, considering the day and hour, very profane, Mr Locksley Suppose you go away and let me read my Bible"

"Meanwhile," I asked, "what shall I do?"

"Go and read yours, if you have one"

"I haven't"

I was, nevertheless, compelled to retire, with the promise of a second audience in half an hour Poor Miss Blunt owes it to her conscience to read a certain number of chapters What a pure and upright soul she is! And what an edifying spectacle is much of our feminine piety! Women find a place for every thing in their commodious little minds, just as they

do in their wonderfully subdivided trunks, when they go on a journey I have no doubt that this young lady stows away her religion in a corner, just as she does her Sunday bonnet.—and, when the proper moment comes, draws it forth, and reflects while she assumes it before the glass, and blows away the strictly imaginary dust for what worldly impunity can penetrate through half a dozen layers of cambric and tissue-paper? Dear me, what a comfort it is to have a nice, fresh, holiday faith!—When I returned to the parlor, Miss Blunt was still sitting with her Bible in her lap. Somehow or other, I no longer felt in the mood for jesting. So I asked her soberly what she had been reading. Soberly she answered me. She inquired how I had spent my half-hour.

“In thinking good Sabbath thoughts,” I said. “I have been walking in the garden.” And then I spoke my mind. “I have been thanking Heaven that it has led me, a poor, friendless wanderer, into so peaceful an anchorage.”

“Are you, then, so poor and friendless?” asked Miss Blunt, quite abruptly.

“Did you ever hear of an art-student under thirty who wasn’t poor?” I answered. “Upon my word, I have yet to sell my first picture. Then, as for being friendless, there are not five people in the world who really care for me.”

“Really care? I am afraid you look too close. And then I think five good friends is a very large number. I think myself very well off with a couple. But if you so are friendless, it’s probably your own fault.”

“Perhaps it is,” said I, sitting down in the rocking-chair, “and yet, perhaps, it isn’t. Have you found me so very repulsive? Haven’t you, on the contrary, found me rather sociable?”

She folded her arms, and quietly looked at me for a moment, before answering. I shouldn’t wonder if I blushed a little.

“You want a compliment, Mr. Locksley; that’s the long and short of it. I have not paid you a com-
pliment since you have been here. How you must have suffered! But it’s a pity you couldn’t have waited awhile longer, instead of beginning to angle with that very clumsy bait. For an artist, you are very martistic. Men never know how to wait. ‘Have I found you repulsive? Haven’t I found you sociable?’ Perhaps, after all, considering what I have in my mind, it is as well that you asked for your compliment. I have found you charming. I say it freely; and

yet I say, with equal sincerity, that I fancy very few others would find you so. I can say decidedly that you are not sociable. You are entirely too particular. You are considerate of me, because you know that I know that you are so. There’s the rub, you see. I know that you know that I know it. Don’t interrupt me, I am going to be eloquent. I want you to understand why I don’t consider you sociable. You call Mr. Johnson conceited, but, really, I don’t believe he’s nearly as conceited as yourself. You are too conceited to be sociable, he is not. I am an obscure, weak-minded woman,—weak-minded, you know, compared with men. I can be patronized,—yes, that’s the word. Would you be equally amiable with a person as strong, as clear-sighted as yourself, with a person equally averse with yourself to being under an obligation? I think not. Of course it’s delightful to charm people. Who wouldn’t? There is no harm in it, as long as the charmer does not set up for a public bene-
factor. If I were a man, a clever man like yourself, who had seen the world, who was not to be charmed and encouraged, but to be convinced and refuted, would you be equally amiable? It will perhaps seem absurd to you, and it will certainly seem egotistical, but I consider myself sociable, for all that I have only a couple of friends,—my father and the principal of the school. That is, I mingle with women without any second thought. Not that I wish you to do so. on the contrary, if the contrary is natural to you. But I don’t believe you mingle in the same way with men. You may ask me what I know about it. Of course I know nothing. I simply guess. When I have done, indeed, I mean to beg your pardon for all I have said: but until then, give me a chance. You are incapable of listening deferentially to stupid, bigoted persons. I am not, I do it every day. Ah, you have no idea what nice manners I have in the exercise of my profession! Every day I have occasion to pocket my pride and to stifle my precious sense of the ridiculous,—of which, of course, you think I haven’t a bit. It is, for instance, a constant vexation to me to be poor. It makes me frequently hate rich women; it makes me despise poor ones. I don’t know whether you suffer acutely from the narrowness of your own means, but if you do I dare say you shun rich men. I don’t. I like to go into rich people’s houses, and to be very polite to the ladies of the house, especially if they are very well-dressed and ignorant and vulgar. All women are like me in this respect; and all men

more or less like you. That is, after all, the text of my sermon. Compared with us, it has always seemed to me that you arearrant cowards,—that we alone are brave. To be sociable, you must have a great deal of pluck. You are too fine a gentleman. Go and teach school, or open a corner grocery, or sit in a law office all day, waiting for clients: *then* you will be sociable. As yet, you are only agreeable. It is your own fault, if people don't care for you. You don't care for them. That you should be indifferent to their applause is all very well, but you don't care for their indifference. You are amiable, you are very kind, and you are also very lazy. You consider that you are working now, don't you? Many persons would not call it work."

It was now certainly my turn to fold my arms.

"And now," added my companion, as I did so, "I beg your pardon."

"This was certainly worth waiting for," said I. "I don't know what answer to make. My head swims. I don't know whether you have been attacking me or praising me. So you advise me to open a corner grocery, do you?"

"I advise you to do something that will make you a little less satirical. You had better marry, for instance."

"*Je ne demande pas mieux?*" Will you have me? I can't afford it."

"Marry a rich woman?"

I shook my head.

"Why not?" asked Miss Blunt. "Because people would accuse you of being mercenary? What of that? I mean to marry the first rich man who offers. Do you know that I am tired of living alone in this weary old way, teaching little guls their gamut, and turning ing and patching my dresses? I mean to marry the first man who offers."

"Even if he is poor?"

"Even if he is poor, ugly, and stupid."

"I am your man, then. Would you take me, if I were to offer?"

"Try and see."

"Must I get upon my knees?"

"No, you need not even do that. Am I not on mine? It would be too fine an irony. Remain as you are, lounging back in your chair, with your thumbs in your waistcoat."

If I were writing a romance now, instead of transcribing facts, I would say that I knew not what

"I ask nothing better."

might have happened at this juncture, had not the door opened and admitted the Captain and Mr. Johnson. The latter was in the highest spirits.

"How are you, Miss Esther? So you have been breaking your leg, eh? How are you, Mr. Locksley? I wish I were a doctor now. Which is it, right or left?"

In this simple fashion he made himself agreeable to Miss Blunt. He stopped to dinner and talked with out ceasing. Whether our hostess had talked herself out in her very animated address to myself an hour before, or whether she preferred to oppose no obstacle to Mr. Johnson's fluency, or whether she was indifferent to him, I know not, but she held her tongue with that easy grace, that charming tacit intimation of "We could, and we would," of which she is so perfect a mistress. This very interesting woman has a number of pretty traits in common with her town-bred sisters, only, whereas in these they are laboriously acquired, in her they are severely natural. I am sure, that if I were to plant her in Madison Square to-morrow, she would, after one quick, all compassing glance, assume the *nil admirari*⁸ in a manner to drive the greatest lady of them all to despair. Johnson is a man of excellent intentions, but no taste. Two or three times I looked at Miss Blunt to see what impression his sallies were making upon her. They seemed to produce none whatever. But I know better, *moi*. Not one of them escaped her. But I suppose she said to herself that her impressions on this point were no business of mine. Perhaps she was right. It is a disagreeable word to use of a woman you admire, but I can't help fancying that she has been a little *soured*. By what? Who shall say? By some old love affair, perhaps.

July 24th.—This evening the Captain and I took a half hour's turn about the harbor. I asked him frankly, as a friend, whether Johnson wants to marry 40 his daughter.

"I guess he does," said the old man, "and yet I hope he don't. You know what he is: he's smart, promising, and already sufficiently well off. But somehow he isn't for a man what my Esther is for a woman."

"That he isn't!" said I, "and honestly, Captain Blunt, I don't know who is—"

"Unless it's yourself," said the Captain.

⁸ To wonder at nothing—not to be admired.

"Thank you I know a great many ways in which Mr Johnson is more worthy of her than I"

"And I know one in which you are more worthy of her than he,—that is, in being what we used to call a gentleman"

"Miss Esther made him sufficiently welcome in her quiet way, on Sunday," I rejoined

"Oh, she respects him," said Blunt. "As she's situated, she might marry him on that. You see, she's weary of hearing little girls drum on the piano. With her ear for music," added the Captain, "I wonder she has borne it so long"

"She is certainly meant for better things," said I

"Well," answered the Captain, who has an honest habit of deprecating your agreement, when it occurs to him that he has obtained it for sentiments which fall somewhat short of the stoical.—"well," said he, with a very dry expression of mouth, "she's born to do her duty. We are all of us born for that"

"Sometimes our duty is rather dreary," said I.

"So it be, but what's the help for it? I don't want to die without seeing my daughter provided for. What she makes by teaching is a pretty slim subsistence. There was a time when I thought she was going to be fixed for life, but it all blew over. There was a young fellow here from down Boston way, who came about as near to it as you can come, when you actually don't. He and Esther were excellent friends. One day Esther came up to me, and looked me in the face, and told me she was engaged."

"Who to?" says I, though, of course, I knew, and Esther told me as much "When do you expect to marry?" I asked

"When John grows rich enough," says she.

"When will that be?"

"It may not be for years," said poor Esther.

"A whole year passed, and as far as I could see, the young man came no nearer to his fortune. He was forever running to and fro between this place and Boston. I asked no questions, because I knew that my poor girl wished it so. But at last, one day, I began to think it was time to take an observation, and see whereabouts we stood."

"Has John made his fortune yet?" I asked.

"I don't know, father," said Esther.

"When are you to be married?"

"Never!" said my poor little girl, and burst into tears. "Please ask me no questions," said she. "Our engagement is over. Ask me no questions."

"Tell me one thing," said I: "where is that d—d scoundrel who has broken my daughter's heart?"

"You should have seen the look she gave me."

"Broken my heart, sir? You are very much mistaken. I don't know who you mean."

"I mean John Banister," said I. That was his name

"I believe Mr Banister is in China," says Esther, as grand as the Queen of Sheba.⁹ And there was an end of it. I never learnt the ins and outs of it. I have been told that Banister is accumulating money very fast in the China trade."

August 7th—I have made no entry for more than a fortnight. They tell me I have been very ill, and I find no difficulty in believing them. I suppose I took cold, sitting out so late, sketching. At all events, I have had a mild intermittent fever. I have slept so much, however, that the time has seemed rather short. I have been tenderly nursed by this kind old gentleman, his daughter, and his maid-servant. God bless them, one and all! I say his daughter, because old Dorothy informs me that for half an hour one morning, at dawn, after a night during which I had been very feeble, Miss Blunt relieved guard at my bedside, while I lay wrapt in brutal slumber. It is very jolly to see sky and ocean once again. I have got myself into my easy-chair by the open window, with my shutters closed and the lattice open, and here I sit with my book on my knee, scratching away feebly enough. Now and then I peep from my cool, dark sick-chamber out into the world of light. High noon at mid-summer! What a spectacle! There are no clouds in the sky, no waves on the ocean. The sun has it all to himself. To look long at the garden makes the eyes water. And we—"Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes, and Nokes"¹⁰—propose to paint that kingdom of light. *Allons, donc!*¹¹

The loveliest of women has just tapped, and come in with a plate of early peaches. The peaches are of a gorgeous color and plumpness; but Miss Blunt looks pale and thin. The hot weather doesn't agree with her. She is overworked. Confound it! Of course I thanked her warmly for her attentions during my illness. She disclaims all gratitude, and refers me to her father and Mrs. Dorothy.

⁹ Cf. I Kings x.1-4.

¹⁰ Robert Browning, "Popularity."

¹¹ Let's go, then.

"I allude more especially," said I, "to that little hour at the end of a weary night, when you stole in like a kind of moribund Aurora,¹² and drove away the shadows from my brain. That morning, you know, I began to get better."

"It was, indeed, a very little hour," said Miss Blunt. "It was about ten minutes." And then she began to scold me for presuming to touch a pen during my convalescence. She laughs at me, indeed, for keeping a diary at all. "Of all things," cried she, "a sentimental man is the most despicable!"

I confess I was somewhat nettled. The thrust seemed gratuitous.

"Of all things," I answered, "a woman without sentiment is the most unlovely."

"Sentiment and loveliness are all very well, when you have time for them," said Miss Blunt. "I haven't I'm not rich enough. Good morning."

Speaking of another woman, I would say that she flounced out of the room. But such was the gait of *20* Juno, when she moved stiffly over the grass from where Paris stood with Venus holding the apple,¹³ gathering up her divine vestment, and leaving the others to guess at her face—

Juno has just come back to say that she forgot what she came for half an hour ago. What will I be pleased to like for dinner?

"I have just been writing in my diary that you flounced out of the room," said I.

"Have you, indeed? Now you can write that I have *30* bounced in. There's a nice cold chicken downstairs," etc., etc.

August 14th—This afternoon I sent for a light wagon, and treated Miss Blunt to a drive. We went successively over the three beaches. What a time we had, coming home! I shall never forget that hard trot over Weston's Beach. The tide was very low, and we had the whole glittering, weltering strand to ourselves. There was a heavy blow yesterday, which *40* had not yet subsided, and the waves had been lashed into a magnificent fury. Trot, trot, trot, trot, we trundled over the hard sand. The sound of the horse's hoofs rang out sharp against the monotone of the thunderous surf, as we drew nearer and nearer to the long line of the cliffs. At our left, almost from the

lofty zenith of the pale evening sky to the high western horizon of the tumultuous dark green sea, was suspended, so to speak, one of those gorgeous vertical sunsets that Turner loved so well. It was a splendid confusion of purple and green and gold,—the clouds flying and flowing in the wind like the folds of a mighty banner borne by some triumphal fleet whose prows were not visible above the long chain of mountainous waves. As we reached the point where the cliffs plunge down upon the beach, I pulled up, and we remained for some moments looking out along the low, brown, obstinate barrier at whose feet the impetuous waters were rolling themselves into powder.

August 17th—This evening, as I lighted my bedroom candle, I saw that the Captain had something to say to me. So I waited below until the old man and his daughter had performed their usual picturesque embrace, and the latter had given me that hand shake and that smile which I never failed to exact.

"Johnson has got his discharge," said the old man, when he had heard his daughter's door close upstairs.

"What do you mean?"

He pointed with his thumb to the room above, where we heard, through the thin partition, the movement of Miss Blunt's light step.

"You mean that he has proposed to Miss *Esther?*"

The Captain nodded.

"And has been refused?"

"Flat."

"Poor fellow!" said I, very honestly. "Did he tell you himself?"

"Yes, with tears in his eyes. He wanted me to speak for him. I told him it was no use. Then he began to say hard things of my poor girl."

"What kind of things?"

"A pack of falsehoods. He says she has no heart. She has promised always to regard him as a friend it's more than I will, hang him!"

"Poor fellow!" said I, and now, as I write, I can only repeat, considering what a hope was here broken, Poor fellow!

August 23d—I have been lounging about all day, thinking of it, dreaming of it, spooning over it, as they say. This is a decided waste of time, I think,

¹² In Greek mythology, Goddess of the Dawn.

¹³ In Greek mythology, the dispute over the golden apple intended for the goddess, which Paris awarded to Venus.

accordingly, the best thing for me to do is, to sit down and lay the ghost by writing out my story

On Thursday evening Miss Blunt happened to intimate that she had a holiday on the morrow, it being the birthday of the lady in whose establishment she teaches

"There is to be a tea-party at four o'clock in the afternoon for the resident pupils and teachers," said Miss Esther. "Tea at four! what do you think of that? And then there is to be a speech-making by the smartest young lady. As my services are not required, I propose to be absent. Suppose, father, you take us out in your boat. Will you come, Mr. Locksley? We shall have a nice little picnic. Let us go over to old Fort Pudding, across the bay. We will take our dinner with us, and send Dorothy to spend the day with her sister, and put the house-key in our pocket, and not come home till we please"

I warmly espoused the project, and it was accordingly carried into execution the next morning, when, at about ten o'clock, we pushed off from our little wharf at the garden-foot. It was a perfect summer's day. I can say no more for it. We made a quiet run over to the point of our destination. I shall never forget the wondrous stillness which brooded over earth and water, as we weighed anchor in the lee of my old friend,—or old enemy,—the ruined fort. The deep, translucent water reposed at the base of the warm sunlit cliff like a great basin of glass, which I half expected to hear shiver and crack as our keel ploughed through it. And how color and sound stood out in the transparent air! How audibly the little ripples on the beach whispered to the open sky! How our irreverent voices seemed to jar upon the privacy of the little cove! The mossy rocks doubled themselves without a flaw in the clear, dark water. The gleaming white beach lay fringed with its deep deposits of odorous sea-weed, gleaming black. The steep straggling sides of the cliffs raised aloft their rugged angles against the burning blue of the sky. I remember when Miss Blunt stepped ashore and stood upon the beach, relieved against the heavy shadow of a recess in the cliff, while her father and I busied ourselves with gathering up our baskets and fastening the anchor—I remember, I say, what a figure she made. There is a certain purity in this Cragthorpe air which I have never seen approached,—a lightness, a brilliancy, a *crudity*, which allows

perfect liberty of self-assertion to each individual object in the landscape. The prospect is ever more or less like a picture which lacks its final process, its reduction to unity. Miss Blunt's figure, as she stood there on the beach, was almost *enarde*,¹⁴ but how lovely it was! Her light muslin dress, gathered up over her short white skirt, her little black mantilla, the blue veil which she had knotted about her neck, the crimson shawl which she had thrown over her arm, the little silken dome which she poised over her head in one gloved hand, while the other retained her crisp draperies, and which cast down upon her face a sharp circle of shade, out of which her cheerful eyes shone darkly and her happy mouth smiled whitely,—these are some of the hastily noted points of the picture

"Young woman," I cried out, over the water, "I do wish you might know how pretty you look!"

"How do you know I don't?" she answered. "I should think I might. You don't look so badly, yourself. But it's not I, it's the accessories"

"Hang it! I am going to become profane," I called out again.

"Swear ahead," said the Captain.

"I am going to say you are devilish pretty"

"Dear me! is that all?" cried Miss Blunt, with a little light laugh, which must have made the tutelary sirens of the cove ready to die with jealousy down in their submarine bowers

By the time the Captain and I had landed our effects, our companion had tripped lightly up the forehead of the cliff—in one place it is very retreating—and disappeared over its crown. She soon reappeared with an intensely white handkerchief added to her other provocations, which she waved to us, as we trudged upward, carrying our baskets. When we stopped to take breath on the summit, and wipe our foreheads we of course, rebuked her who was roaming about idly with her parasol and gloves.

"Do you think I am going to take any trouble or do any work?" cried Miss Esther, in the greatest good-humor. "Is not this my holiday? I am not going to raise a finger, nor soil these beautiful gloves, for which I paid a dollar at Mr. Dawson's in Cragthorpe. After you have found a shady place for your provisions, I would like you to look for a spring. I am very thirsty."

"Find the spring yourself, Miss," said her father

¹⁴ French, "harsh."

"Mr Locksley and I have a spring in this basket Take a pull, su "

And the Captain drew forth a stout black bottle "Give me a cup, and I will look for some water," said Miss Blunt "Only I'm so afraid of the snakes! If you hear a scream, you may know it's a snake "

"Screaming snakes!" said I, "that's a new species "

What nonsense it all sounds like now! As we looked about us, shade seemed scarce, as it generally is, in this region But Miss Blunt, like the very adroit and practical young person she is, for all that she would have me believe the contrary, soon discovered a capital cool spring in the shelter of a pleasant little dell, beneath a clump of firs Hither, as one of the young gentlemen who imitate Tennyson would say, we brought our basket, Blunt and I, while Esther dipped the cup, and held it dripping to our thirsty lips, and laid the cloth, and on the grass disposed the platters round I should have to be a poet, indeed, to describe half the happiness and the silly poetry ²⁰ and purity and beauty of this bright long summer's day We ate, drank, and talked, we ate occasionally with our fingers, we drank out of the necks of our bottles, and we talked with our mouths full, as befits (and excuses) those who talk wild nonsense We told stories without the least point Blunt and I made atrocious puns I believe, indeed, that Miss Blunt herself made one little punkin, as I called it If there had been any superfluous representative of humanity present, to register the fact, I should say ³⁰ that we made fools of ourselves But as there was no fool on hand, I need say nothing about it I am conscious myself of having said several witty things, which Miss Blunt understood *in vino veritas* ¹⁵ The dear old Captain twanged the long bow indefatigably The bright high sun lingered above us the livelong day, and drowned the prospect with light and warmth One of these days I mean to paint a picture which in future ages, when my dear native land shall boast a national school of art will hang in the ⁴⁰ *Salon Carré* ¹⁶ of the great central museum (located, let us say, in Chicago) and remind folks—or rather make them forget—Giorgione, Bordonc, and Veronese. A Rural Festival, three persons feasting under some trees, scene, nowhere in particular, time and hour, problematical Female figure a big *brune*, young man reclining on his elbow, old man drunk

ing An empty sky with no end of expression The whole stupendous in color, drawing, feeling Artist uncertain, supposed to be Robinson, 1900 That's about the programme

After dinner the Captain began to look out across the bay, and, noticing the uprising of a little breeze, expressed a wish to cruise about for an hour or two He proposed to us to walk along the shore to a point a couple of miles northward, and there meet the boat His daughter having agreed to this proposition, he set off with the lightened pinnace and in less than half an hour we saw him standing out from shore Miss Blunt and I did not begin our walk for a long long time We sat and talked beneath the trees At our feet, a wide cleft in the hills—almost a glen—stretched down to the silent beach Beyond lay the familiar ocean line But, as many philosophers have observed, there is an end to all things At last we got up Miss Blunt said, that, as the air was freshening, she believed she would put on her shawl I helped her to fold it into the proper shape, and then I placed it on her shoulders, her crimson shawl over her black silk sack And then she tied her veil once more about her neck, and gave me her hat to hold, while she effected a partial redistribution of her hairpins By way of being humorous, I placed her hat on my own head, at which she was kind enough to smile, as with downcast face and uplifted elbows she fumbled among her braids And then she shook out the creases of her dress, and drew on her gloves, and finally she said, "Well"—that inevitable tribute to time and morality which follows upon even the mildest form of dissipation Very slowly it was that we wandered down the little glen Slowly, too, we followed the course of the narrow and sinuous beach, as it keeps to the foot of the low cliffs We encountered no sign of human interest Our conversation I need hardly repeat I think I may trust it to the keeping of my memory, I think I shall be likely to remember it It was all very sober and sensible,—such talk as it is both easy and pleasant to remember, it was even prosaic,—or, at least, if there was a vein of poetry in it, I should have defied a listener to put his finger on it There was no exaltation of feeling or utterance on either side, on one side, indeed, there was very little utterance Am I wrong in conjecturing, however, that there was considerable feeling of a certain quiet kind? Miss Blunt maintained a rich, golden silence I, on the other hand,

¹⁵ 'Truth in wine'

¹⁶ 'Square Salon'

was very voluble. What a sweet, womanly listener she is!

September 1st—I have been working steadily for a week. This is the first day of autumn. Read aloud to Miss Blunt a little Wordsworth.

September 10th Midnight.—Worked without interruption,—until yesterday, inclusive, that is. But with the day now closing—or opening—begins a new era. My poor rapid old diary, at last you shall hold a *fact*

For three days past we have been having damp, chilly weather. Dusk has fallen early. This evening, after tea, the Captain went into town,—on business, as he said. I believe, to attend some Poorhouse or Hospital Board. Esther and I went into the parlor. The room seemed cold. She brought in the lamp from the dining-room, and proposed we should have a little fire. I went into the kitchen, procured an armful of wood, and while she drew the curtains 20 and wheeled up the table, I kindled a lively, crackling blaze. A fortnight ago she would not have allowed me to do this without a protest. She would not have offered to do it herself,—not she!—but she would have said that I was not here to serve, but to be served, and would have pretended to call Dorothy. Of course I should have had my own way. But we have changed all that. Esther went to her piano, and I sat down to a book. I read not a word. I sat looking at my mistress, and thinking with a very uneasy 30 heart. For the first time in our friendship, she had put on a dark, warm dress: I think it was of the material called alpaca. The first time I saw her she wore a white dress with a purple neck-ribbon, now she wore a black dress with the same ribbon. That is, I remember wondering, as I sat there eyeing her, whether it *was* the same ribbon, or merely another like it. My heart was in my throat, and yet I thought of a number of trivialities of the same kind. At last I spoke.

"Miss Blunt," I said, "do you remember the first evening I passed beneath your roof, last June?"

"Perfectly," she replied, without stopping.

"You played this same piece."

"Yes; I played it very badly, too. I only half knew it. But it is a showy piece, and I wished to produce an effect. I didn't know then how indifferent you are to music."

"I paid no particular attention to the piece. I was

intent upon the performer."

"So the performer supposed."

"What reason had you to suppose so?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Did you ever know a woman to be able to give a reason, when she has guessed aright?"

"I think they generally contrive to make up a reason, afterwards. Come, what was yours?"

"Well, you *stared* so hard."

"Fie! I don't believe it. That's unkind."

"You said you wished me to invent a reason. If I really had one, I don't remember it."

"You told me you remembered the occasion in question perfectly."

"I meant the circumstances. I remember what we had for tea, I remember what dress I wore. But I don't remember my feelings. They were naturally not very memorable."

"What did you say, when your father proposed 20 my coming?"

"I asked how much you would be willing to pay."

"And then?"

"And then, if you looked 'respectable'."

"And then?"

"That was all. I told father that he could do as he pleased."

She continued to play. Leaning back in my chair, I continued to look at her. There was a considerable pause.

"Miss Esther," said I, at last.

"Yes."

"Excuse me for interrupting you so often. But,"—and I got up and went to the piano,—“but I thank Heaven that it has brought you and me together.”

She looked up at me and bowed her head with a little smile, as her hands still wandered over the keys.

"Heaven has certainly been very good to us," said she.

40 "How much longer are you going to play?" I asked.

"I'm sure I don't know. As long as you like."

"If you want to do as I like, you will stop immediately."

She let her hands rest on the keys a moment, and gave me a rapid, questioning look. Whether she found a sufficient answer in my face I know not; but she slowly rose, and, with a very pretty affectation of obedience, began to close the instrument. I helped her to do so.

"Perhaps you would like to be quite alone," she said "I suppose your own room is too cold"

"Yes," I answered, "you've hit it exactly I wish to be alone I wish to monopolize this cheerful blaze Hadn't you better go into the kitchen and sit with the cook? It takes you women to make such cruel speeches"

"When we women are cruel, Mr Locksley, it is without knowing it We are not wilfully so When we learn that we have been unkind, we very humbly ask pardon, without even knowing what our crime has been" And she made me a very low curtsy

"I will tell you what your crime has been," said I "Come and sit by the fire It's rather a long story"

"A long story? Then let me get my work"

"Confound your work! Excuse me, but I mean it I want you to listen to me Believe me, you will need all your thoughts"

She looked at me steadily a moment, and I returned her glance During that moment I was reflecting whether I might silently emphasize my request by laying a lover's hand upon her shoulder I decided that I might not She walked over and quietly seated herself in a low chair by the fire Here she patiently folded her arms I sat down before her

"With you, Miss Blunt," said I, "one must be very explicit You are not in the habit of taking things for granted You have a great deal of imagination, but you rarely exercise it on the behalf of other people" I stopped a moment

"Is that my crime?" asked my companion

"It's not so much a crime as a vice," said I, "and perhaps not so much a vice as a virtue Your crime is, that you are so stone cold to a poor devil who loves you"

She burst into a rather shrill laugh I wonder whether she thought I meant Johnson

"Who are you speaking for, Mr Locksley?" she asked

"Are there so many? For myself"

"Honestly?"

"Honestly doesn't begin to express it"

"What is that French phrase that you are forever using? I think I may say, '*Allons, donc*'"

"Let us speak plain English, Miss Blunt"

"'Stone cold' is certainly very plain English I don't see the relative importance of the two branches of your proposition Which is the principal, and

which the subordinate clause,—that I am stone cold, as you call it, or that you love me, as you call it?"

"As I call it? What would you have me call it? For God's sake, Miss Blunt, be serious, or I shall call it something else Yes, I love you Don't you believe it?"

"I am open to conviction"

"Thank God!" said I

And I attempted to take her hand

"No, no, Mr Locksley," said she,—“not just yet, if you please"

"Action speaks louder than words," said I

"There is no need of speaking loud I hear you perfectly"

"I certainly sha'n't whisper," said I, "although it is the custom, I believe, for lovers to do so Will you be my wife?"

"I sha'n't whisper, either, Mr Locksley Yes, I will"

And now she put out her hand—That's my fact

September 12th—We are to be married within three weeks

September 19th—I have been in New York a week, transacting business I got back yesterday I find every one here talking about our engagement Esther tells me that it was talked about a month ago, and that there is a very general feeling of disappointment that I am not rich

"Really, if you don't mind it," said I, "I don't see why others should"

"I don't know whether you are rich or not," says Esther, "but I know that I am"

"Indeed! I was not aware that you had a private fortune," etc, etc

This little farce is repeated in some shape every day I am very idle I smoke a great deal, and lounge about all day, with my hands in my pockets I am free from that ineffable weariness of ceaseless giving which I experienced six months ago I was shorn of my hereditary trinkets at that period, and I have resolved that *this* engagement at all events, shall have no connection with the shops I was balked of my poetry once, I sha'n't be a second time I don't think there is much danger of this Esther deals it out with full hands She takes a very pretty interest in her simple outfit,—showing me triumphantly certain of her purchases, and making a great mystery about others, which she is pleased to denominate table-

cloths and napkins Last evening I found her sewing buttons on a tablecloth I had heard a great deal of a certain gray silk dress, and this morning, accordingly, she marched up to me, arrayed in this garment It is trimmed with velvet, and hath flounces, a train, and all the modern improvements generally

"There is only one objection to it," said Esther, parading before the glass in my painting-room "I am afraid it is above our station"

"By Jove! I'll paint your portrait in it," said I, "and make our fortune All the other men who have handsome wives will bring them to be painted"

"You mean all the women who have handsome dresses," said Esther, with great humility

Our wedding is fixed for next Thursday I tell Esther that it will be as little of a wedding, and as much of a marriage, as possible. Her father and her good friend the schoolmistress alone are to be present—My secret oppresses me considerably; but I have resolved to keep it for the honeymoon, when it may take care of itself I am harassed with a dismal apprehension, that, if Esther were to discover it now, the whole thing would be *à refaire*.¹⁷ I have taken rooms at a romantic little watering-place called Clifton, ten miles off The hotel is already quite free of city-people, and we shall be almost alone

September 28th—We have been here two days. The little transaction in the church went off smoothly I am truly sorry for the Captain We drove directly over here, and reached the place at dusk It was a raw, black day We have a couple of good rooms, close to the savage sea I am nevertheless afraid I have made a mistake. It would perhaps have been wiser to go inland These things are not immaterial we make our own heaven, but we scarcely make our own earth I am writing at a little table by the window, looking out on the rocks, the gathering dusk, and the rising fog My wife has wandered down to the rocky platform in front of the house. I can see her from here, bareheaded, in that old crimson shawl, talking to one of the landlord's little boys She has just given the little fellow a kiss, bless her heart! I remember her telling me once that she was very fond of little boys; and, indeed, I have noticed that they are seldom too dirty for her to take on her knee I have been reading over these pages for the first time in—I don't know when. They are

¹⁷ "To do over"

filled with *her*,—even more in thought than in word I believe I will show them to her, when she comes in I will give her the book to read, and sit by her, watching her face,—watching the great secret dawn upon her

Later—Somehow or other, I can write this quietly enough but I hardly think I shall ever write any more When Esther came in, I handed her this book

"I want you to read it," said I

She turned very pale, and laid it on the table, shaking her head.

"I know it," she said

"What do you know?"

"That you have a hundred thousand a year. But, believe me, Mr Locksley, I am none the worse for the knowledge You intimated in one place in your book that I am born for wealth and splendor I believe I am You pretend to hate your money; but you would not have had me without it If you really love me,—and I think you do,—you will not let this make any difference I am not such a fool as to attempt to talk here about my sensations But I remember what I said."

"What do you expect me to do?" I asked. "Shall I call you some horrible name and cast you off?"

"I expect you to show the same courage that I am showing I never said I loved you I never deceived you in that I said I would be your wife So I will, faithfully. I haven't so much heart as you think; and yet, too, I have a great deal more. I am incapable of more than one deception—Mercy! didn't you see it? didn't you know it? see that I saw it? know that I knew it? It was diamond cut diamond. You deceived me, I deceived you. Now that your deception ceases, mine ceases. Now we are free, with our hundred thousand a year! Excuse me, but it sometimes comes across me! Now we can be good and honest and true It was all a make-believe virtue before."

"So you read that thing?" I asked, actually—strange as it may seem—for something to say.

"Yes, while you were ill It was lying with your pen in it, on the table. I read it because I suspected. Otherwise I shouldn't have done so."

"It was the act of a false woman," said I.

"A false woman? No,—simply of a woman. I am a woman, sir." And she began to smile. "Come, you be a man!"

FROM
*Hawthorne*¹⁸

CHAPTER I

Early Years

It will be necessary, for several reasons, to give this short sketch the form rather of a critical essay than of a biography. The data for a life of Nathaniel Hawthorne are the reverse of copious, and even if they were abundant they would serve but in a limited measure the purpose of the biographer. Hawthorne's career was probably as tranquil and uneventful a one as ever fell to the lot of a man of letters, it was almost strikingly deficient in incident, in what may be called the dramatic quality. Few men of equal genius and of equal eminence can have led, on the whole, a simpler life. His six volumes of Note Books illustrate this simplicity, they are a sort of monument to an unagitated fortune. Hawthorne's career had vicissitudes of variations, it was passed, for the most part, in a small and homogeneous society, in a provincial, rural community, it had few perceptible points of contact with what is called the world, with public events, with the manners of his time, even with the life of his neighbours. Its literary incidents are not numerous. He produced, in quantity, but little. His works consist of four novels and the fragment of another, five volumes of short tales, a collection of sketches, and a couple of story-books for children. And yet some account of the man and the writer is well worth giving. Whatever may have been Hawthorne's private lot, he has the importance of being the most beautiful and most eminent representative of a literature. The importance of the literature may be questioned, but at any rate, in the field of letters, Hawthorne is the most valuable example of the American genius. That genius has not, as a whole, been literary, but Hawthorne was on his limited scale a master of expression. He is the writer to whom his countrymen most confidently point when they wish to make a claim to have enriched the mother-tongue, and, judging from present appearances, he will long occupy this honourable position. If there is something very fortunate for him in the way that he borrows an added relief from the absence of competitors in his own line, and from the general flatness of the literary field that surrounds him, there is also, to a spectator, something almost touching in his situation. He was so modest and delicate a genius that we may fancy him appealing from the lonely honour of a representative attitude—perceiving a painful incongruity between his imponderable literary baggage and the large conditions of American life. Hawthorne on the one side, is so subtle and slender and unpretending and the American world, on the other, is so vast and various and substantial, that it might seem to the author of *The Scarlet Letter* and the *Mosses from an Old Manse*, that we render him a poor service in contrasting his proportions with those of a great civilization. But our author must accept the awkward as well as the graceful side of his fame, for he has the advantage of pointing a valuable moral. This moral is that the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep, that it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature, that it needs a complex social machinery to set a writer in motion. American civilization has hitherto had other things to do than to produce flowers, and before giving birth to writers it has wisely occupied itself with providing something for them to write about. Thrice or four beautiful plants of trans-Atlantic growth are the sum of what the world usually recognises, and in this modest nosegay the genius of Hawthorne is admitted to have the rarest and sweetest fragrance.

His very simplicity has been in his favour, it has helped him to appear complete and homogeneous. To talk of his being national would be to force the note and make a mistake of proportion, but he is, in spite of the absence of the realistic quality, intensely and vividly local. Out of the soil of New England he sprang—in a crevice of that immitigable granite he sprouted and bloomed. Half of the interest that he possesses for an American reader with any turn for analysis must reside in his latent New England savour, and I think it no more than just to say that whatever entertainment he may yield to those who know him at a distance, it is an almost indispensable condition of properly appreciating him to have received a personal impression of the manners, the moials, indeed of the very climate, of the great region

¹⁸ Published in the *English Men of Letters* series, New York, 1879

of which the remarkable city of Boston is the metropolis. The cold, bright air of New England seems to blow through his pages, and these, in the opinion of many people, are the medium in which it is most agreeable to make the acquaintance of that tonic atmosphere. As to whether it is worth while to seek to know something of New England in order to extract a more intimate quality from *The House of Seven Gables* and *The Blithedale Romance*, I need not pronounce, but it is certain that a considerable observation of the society to which these productions were more directly addressed is a capital preparation for enjoying them. I have alluded to the absence in Hawthorne of that quality of realism which is now so much in fashion, an absence in regard to which there will of course be more to say, and yet I think I am not fanciful in saying that he testifies to the sentiments of the society in which he flourished almost as pertinently (proportions observed) as Balzac and some of his descendants—MM. Flaubert and Zola—testify to the manners and morals of the French people. He was not a man with a literary theory; he was guiltless of a system, and I am not sure that he had ever heard of Realism, this remarkable compound having (although it was invented some time earlier) come into general use only since his death. He had certainly not proposed to himself to give an account of the social idiosyncrasies of his fellow-citizens, for his touch on such points is always light and vague, he has none of the apparatus of an historian, and his shadowy style of portraiture never suggests a rigid standard of accuracy. Nevertheless, he virtually offers the most vivid reflection of New England life that has found its way into literature. His value in this respect is not diminished by the fact that he has not attempted to portray the usual Yankee of comedy, and that he has been almost culpably indifferent to his opportunities for commemorating the variations of colloquial English that may be observed in the New World. His characters do not express themselves in the dialect of the *Biglow Papers*—their language, indeed, is apt to be too elegant, too delicate. They are not portraits of actual types, and in their phraseology there is nothing imitative. But none the less, Hawthorne's work savours thoroughly of the local soil—it is redolent of the social system in which he had his being.

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The "dreary and unprosperous condition" that he speaks of in regard to the fortunes of his family is an allusion to the fact that several generations followed each other on the soil in which they had been planted, that during the eighteenth century a succession of Hawthornes trod the simple streets of Salem without ever conferring any especial lustre upon the town or receiving, presumably, any great delight from it. A hundred years of Salem would perhaps be rather a dead-weight for any family to carry, and we venture to imagine that the Hawthornes were dull and depressed. They did what they could, however, to improve their situation, they trod the Salem streets as little as possible. They went to sea, and made long voyages, seaman'ship became the regular profession of the family. Hawthorne has said it in charming language. "From father to son, for above a hundred years, they followed the sea: a grey-headed shipmaster, in each generation, retiring from the quarter-deck to the homestead, while a boy of fourteen took the hereditary place before the mast, confronting the salt spray and the gale which had blustered against his sire and grandsire. The boy also, in due time, passed from the fore-castle to the cabin, spent a tempestuous manhood, and returned from his world-wanderings to grow old and die, and mingle his dust with the natal earth."¹⁹ Our author's grandfather, Daniel Hawthorne, is mentioned by Mr. Lathrop,²⁰ his biographer and son-in-law, as a hardy privateer during the war of Independence. His father, from whom he was named, was also a shipmaster, and he died in foreign lands, in the exercise of his profession. He was carried off by a fever, at Surinam, in 1808.

He left three children, of whom Nathaniel was the only boy. The boy's mother, who had been a Miss Manning, came of a New England stock almost as long established as that of her husband; she is described by our author's biographer as a woman of remarkable beauty, and by an authority whom he quotes, as being "a minute observer of religious festivals," of "feasts, fasts, new-moons, and Sabbaths." Of feasts the poor lady in her Puritanic home can have had but a very limited number to celebrate; but of new-moons she may be supposed to have enjoyed the usual, and of Sabbaths even more than the usual, proportion.

In quiet provincial Salem. Nathaniel Hawthorne

¹⁹ *Letter to the Scarlet Letter*.

²⁰ George P. Lathrop, *A Study of Hawthorne*, Boston, 1876.

passed the greater part of his boyhood, as well as many years of his later life Mr Lathrop has much to say about the ancient picturesqueness of the place, and about the mystic influences it would project upon such a mind and character as Hawthorne's. These things are always relative, and in appreciating them everything depends upon the point of view. Mr Lathrop writes for American readers who in such a matter as this are very easy to please. Americans have, as a general thing, a hungry passion for the picturesque, and they are so fond of local colour that they contrive to perceive it in localities in which the amateurs of other countries would detect only the most neutral tints. History, as yet, has left in the United States but so thin and imprisable a deposit that we very soon touch the hard substratum of nature, and nature herself, in the Western World, has the peculiarity of seeming rather crude and immature. The very air looks new and young, the light of the sun seems fresh and innocent as if it knew as yet but few of the secrets of the world and none of the weariness of shining, the vegetation has the appearance of not having reached its majority. A large juvenility is stamped upon the face of things and in the vividness of the present, the past, which died so young and had time to produce so little, attracts but scanty attention. I doubt whether English observers would discover any very striking trace of it in the ancient town of Salem. Still, with all respect to a York and a Shrewsbury, to a Toledo and a Verona, Salem has a physiognomy in which the past plays a more important part than the present. It is of course a very recent past, but one must remember that the dead of yesterday are not more alive than those of a century ago. I know not of what picturesqueness Hawthorne was conscious in his respectable birthplace, I suspect his perception of it was less keen than his biographer assumes it to have been, but he must have felt at least that, of whatever complexity of earlier life there had been in the country, the elm-shadowed streets of Salem were a recognizable memento. He has made considerable mention of the place, here and there, in his tales, but he has nowhere dilated upon it very lovingly, and it is noteworthy that in *The House of the Seven Gables*, the only one of his novels of which the scene is laid in it, he has by no means availed himself of the opportunity to give a description of it. He had of course a filial fondness for it—a deep-seated sense of connec-

tion with it, but he must have spent some very dreary years there, and the two feelings, the mingled tenderness and rancour, are visible in the Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*.

The old town of Salem he writes—my native place though I have dwelt much away from it, both in boyhood and in maturer years—possesses, or did possess, a hold on my affections, the force of which I have never realized during my seasons of actual residence here. Indeed, so far as the physical aspect is concerned, with its flat, unvaried surface covered chiefly with wooden houses, few or none of which pretend to architectural beauty, its irregularity, which is neither picturesque nor quaint but only tame, its long and lazy street, lounging wearily through the whole extent of the peninsula, with Gallows Hill and New Guinea at one end, and a view of the almshouse at the other—such being the features of my native town, it would be quite as reasonable to form a sentimental attachment to a disarranged chequer board.

But he goes on to say that he has never divested himself of the sense of intensely belonging to it—that the spell of the continuity of his life with that of his predecessors has never been broken. "It is no matter that the place is joyless for him, that he is weary of the old wooden houses, the mud and the dust, the dead level of site and sentiment, the chill east wind, and the chilliest of social atmosphere,—all these, and whatever faults besides he may see or imagine, are nothing to the purpose. The spell survives, and just as powerfully as if the natal spot were an earthly paradise." There is a very American quality in this perpetual consciousness of a spell on Hawthorne's part, it is only in a country where newness and change and brevity of tenure are the common substance of life, that the fact of one's ancestors having lived for a hundred and seventy years in a single spot would become an element of one's morality. It is only an imaginative American that would feel urged to keep reverting to this circumstance, to keep analysing and cunningly considering it.

The Salem of to-day has, as New England towns go, a physiognomy of its own, and in spite of Hawthorne's analogy of the disarranged draught-board, it is a decidedly agreeable one. The spreading elms in its streets, the proportion of large, square, honourable-looking houses, suggesting an easy, copious material life, the little gardens, the grassy waysides, the open windows, the air of spice and salubrity and decency, and above all the intimation of larger antecedents—these things compose a picture which has

little of the element that painters call depth of tone, but which is not without something that they would admit to be style. To English eyes the oldest and most honourable of the smaller American towns must seem in a manner primitive and rustic, the shabby, straggling, village-quality appears marked in them, and their social tone is not unnaturally inferred to bear the village stamp. Village-like they are, and it would be no gross incivility to describe them as large, respectable, prosperous, democratic villages. But even a village, in a great and vigorous democracy, where there are no overshadowing squires, where the "county" has no social existence, where the villagers are conscious of no superincumbent strata of gentility, piled upwards into vague regions of privilege—even a village is not an institution to accept of more or less graceful patronage, it thinks extremely well of itself, and is absolute in its own regard. Salem is a sea-port, but it is a sea-port deserted and decayed. It belongs to that rather melancholy group of old coast-towns scattered along the great sea-face of New England, and of which the list is completed by the names of Portsmouth, Plymouth, New Bedford, Newburyport, Newport—superannuated centres of the traffic with foreign lands, which have seen their trade carried away from them by the greater cities. As Hawthorne says, their ventures have gone "to swell, needlessly and imperceptibly, the mighty flood of commerce at New York or Boston." Salem, at the beginning of the present century, played a great part in the Eastern trade, it was the residence of enterprising shipowners who despatched their vessels to Indian and Chinese seas. It was a place of large fortunes, many of which have remained, though the activity that produced them has passed away. These successful traders constituted what Hawthorne calls "the aristocratic class." He alludes in one of his slighter sketches (*The Sister Years*) to the sway of this class, and the "moral influence of wealth" having been more marked in Salem than in any other New England town. The sway, we may believe, was on the whole gently exercised, and the moral influence of wealth was not exerted in the cause of immorality. Hawthorne was probably but imperfectly conscious of an advantage which familiarity had made stale—the fact that he lived in the most democratic and most virtuous of modern communities. Of the virtue it is but civil to suppose that his own family had a liberal share; but not much of the

wealth, apparently, came into their way. Hawthorne was not born to a patrimony, and his income, later in life, never exceeded very modest proportions.

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CHAPTER II

Early Manhood

. . . I know not at what age he began to keep a diary, the first entries in the American volumes are of the summer of 1835. There is a phrase in the preface to his novel of *Transformation*, which must have lingered in the minds of many Americans who have tried to write novels, and to lay the scene of them in the Western world. "No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land." The perusal of Hawthorne's American Note-Books operates as a practical commentary upon this somewhat ominous text. It does so at least to my own mind, it would be too much, perhaps, to say that the effect would be the same for the usual English reader. An American reads between the lines—he completes the suggestions—he constructs a picture. I think I am not guilty of any gross injustice in saying that the picture he constructs from Hawthorne's American diaries, though by no means without charms of its own, is not, on the whole, an interesting one. It is characterised by an extraordinary blankness—a curious paleness of colour and paucity of detail. Hawthorne, as I have said, has a large and healthy appetite for detail, and one is, therefore, the more struck with the lightness of the diet to which his observation was condemned. For myself, as I turn the pages of his journals, I seem to see the image of the crude and simple society in which he lived. I use these epithets, of course, not invidiously, but descriptively; if one desire to enter as closely as possible into Hawthorne's situation, one must endeavour to reproduce his circumstances. We are struck with the large number of elements that were absent from them, and the coldness, the thinness, the blankness, to repeat my epithet, present themselves so vividly that our foremost feeling is that of compassion for a romancer looking for subjects in such a field. It takes so many things, as Hawthorne

must have felt later in life, when he made the acquaintance of the denser, richer, warmer European spectacle—it takes such an accumulation of history and custom, such a complexity of manners and types, to form a fund of suggestion for a novelist. If Hawthorne had been a young Englishman, or a young Frenchman of the same degree of genius, the same cast of mind, the same habits, his consciousness of the world around him would have been a very different affair, however obscure, however reserved, his own personal life, his sense of the life of his fellow-mortals would have been almost infinitely more various. The negative side of the spectacle on which Hawthorne looked out, in his contemplative saunterings and reveries, might, indeed, with a little ingenuity, be made almost ludicrous, one might enumerate the items of high civilization, as it exists in other countries, which are absent from the texture of American life, until it should become a wonder to know what was left. No State, in the European sense of the word, and indeed barely a specific national name. No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country-houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages, nor walled ruins, no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches, no great Universities nor public schools²¹—no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow, no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class—no Epsom nor Ascot!²² Some such list as that might be drawn up of the absent things in American life—especially in the American life of forty years ago, the effect of which, upon an English or a French imagination, would probably, as a general thing, be appalling. The natural remark, in the almost lurid light of such an indictment, would be that if these things are left out, everything is left out. The American knows that a good deal remains, what it is that remains—that is his secret, his joke, as one may say. It would be cruel, in this terrible denudation, to deny him the consolation of his natural gift, that “American humour” of which of late years we have heard so much.

But in helping us to measure what remains, our author's Diaries, as I have already intimated, would

²¹ English “public schools,” like Eton and Harrow, were private and exclusive

²² Famous English racing courses

give comfort rather to persons who might have taken the alarm from the brief sketch I have just attempted of what I have called the negative side of the American social situation, than to those reminding themselves of its fine compensations. Hawthorne's entries are to a great degree accounts of walks in the country, drives in stage-coaches, people he met in taverns. The minuteness of the things that attract his attention, and that he deems worthy of being commemorated, is frequently extreme, and from this fact we get the impression of a general vacancy in the field of vision. “Sunday evening, going by the jail, the setting sun kindled up the windows most cheerfully, as if there were a bright, comfortable light within its darksome stone wall.” “I went yesterday with Monsieur S—— to pick raspberries. He fell through an old log-bridge, thrown over a hollow, looking back, only his head and shoulders appeared through the rotten logs and among the bushes. A shower coming on, the rapid running of a little bare-footed boy, coming up unheard, and dashing swiftly past us and showing us the soles of his naked feet as he ran adown the path and up the opposite side.” In another place he devotes a page to a description of a dog whom he saw running round after its tail, in still another he remarks, in a paragraph by itself—“The aromatic odor of peat-smoke in the sunny autumnal air is very pleasant.” The reader says to himself that when a man turned thirty gives a place in his mind—and his inkstand—to such trifles as these, it is because nothing else of superior importance demands admission. Everything in the Notes indicates a simple, democratic, thinly-composed society, there is no evidence of the writer finding himself in any variety or intimacy of relations with any one or with anything. We find a good deal of warrant for believing that if we add that statement of Mr. Lathrop's about his meals being left at the door of his room, to rural rambles of which an impression of the temporary phases of the local apple-crop were the usual, and an encounter with an organ-grinder, or an eccentric dog, the raucous outcome, we construct a rough image of our author's daily life during the several years that preceded his marriage. He appears to have read a good deal; and that he must have been familiar with the sources of good English, we see from his charming, expressive, slightly self-conscious, cultivated, but not too cultivated, style. Yet neither in these early volumes of his Note-Books, nor in the later, is there

any mention of his reading. There are no literary judgments or impressions—there is almost no allusion to works or to authors. The allusions to individuals of any kind are indeed much less numerous than one might have expected; there is little psychology, little description of manners. We are told by Mr. Lathrop that there existed at Salem, during the early part of Hawthorne's life, "a strong circle of wealthy families," which "maintained rigorously the distinctions of class," and whose "entertainments were 10 splendid, their manners magnificent." This is a rather pictorial way of saying that there were a number of people in the place—the commercial and professional aristocracy, as it were—who lived in high comfort and respectability, and who, in their small provincial way, doubtless had pretensions to be exclusive. Into this delectable company Mr. Lathrop intimates that his hero was free to penetrate. It is easy to believe it; and it would be difficult to perceive why the privilege should have been denied to a young man of genius 20 and culture, who was very good-looking (Hawthorne must have been in these days, judging by his appearance later in life, a strikingly handsome fellow), and whose American pedigree was virtually as long as the longest they could show. But in fact Hawthorne appears to have ignored the good society of his native place almost completely; no echo of its conversation is to be found in his tales or his journals. Such an echo would possibly not have been especially melodious; and if we regret the shyness and stiffness, the 30 reserve, the timidity, the suspicion, or whatever it was, that kept him from knowing what there was to be known, it is not because we have any very definite assurance that his gains would have been great. Still, since a beautiful writer was growing up in Salem, it is a pity that he should not have given himself a chance to commemorate some of the types that flourished in the richest soil of the place. Like almost all people who possess in a strong degree the story-telling faculty, Hawthorne had a democratic strain in his 40 composition, and a relish for the commoner stuff of human nature. Thoroughly American in all ways, he was in none more so than in the vagueness of his sense of social distinctions, and his readiness to forget them if a moral or intellectual sensation were to be gained by it. He liked to fraternise with plain people, to take them on their own terms, and put himself, if possible, into their shoes. His Note-Books, and even his tales, are full of evidence of this easy and natural

feeling about all his unconventional fellow-mortals—this imaginative interest and contemplative curiosity; and it sometimes takes the most charming and graceful forms. Commingled as it is with his own subtlety and delicacy, his complete exemption from vulgarity, it is one of the points in his character which his reader comes most to appreciate—that reader I mean for whom he is not, as for some few, a dusky and malarious genius.

But even if he had had personally as many pretensions as he had few, he must, in the nature of things, have been more or less of a consenting democrat, for democracy was the very key-stone of the simple social structure in which he played his part. The air of his journals and his tales alike are full of the genuine democratic feeling. This feeling has by no means passed out of New England life; it still flourishes in perfection in the great stock of the people, especially in rural communities; but it is probable that at the present hour a writer of Hawthorne's general fastidiousness would not express it quite so artlessly. "A shrewd gentlewoman, who kept a tavern in the town," he says, in *Chippings with a Chisel*, "was anxious to obtain two or three gravestones for the deceased members of her family, and to pay for these solemn commodities by taking the sculptor to board." This image of a gentlewoman keeping a tavern and looking out for boarders, seems, from the point of view to which I allude, not at all incongruous. It will be observed that the lady in question was shrewd; it was probable that she was substantially educated, and of reputable life, and it is certain that she was energetic. These qualities would make it natural to Hawthorne to speak of her as a gentlewoman; the natural tendency in societies where the sense of equality prevails being to take for granted the high level rather than the low. Perhaps the most striking example of the democratic sentiment in all our author's tales, however, is the figure of Uncle Venner, in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Uncle Venner is a poor old man in a brimless hat and patched trousers, who picks up a precarious subsistence by rendering, for a compensation, in the houses and gardens of the good people of Salem, those services that are known in New England as "chores." He carries parcels, splits fire-wood, digs potatoes, collects refuse for the maintenance of his pigs, and looks forward with philosophic equanimity to the time when he shall end his days in the almshouse. But, in spite of the very

modest place that he occupies in the social scale, he is received on a footing of familiarity in the household of the far-descended Miss Pyncheon, and when this ancient lady and her companions take the air in the garden of a summer evening, he steps into the estimable circle and mingles the smoke of his pipe with their refined conversation. This, obviously, is rather imaginative—Uncle Venner is a creation with a purpose. He is an original, a natural moralist, a philosopher, and Hawthorne, who knew perfectly¹⁰ what he was about in introducing him—Hawthorne always knew perfectly what he was about—wished to give in his person an example of humorous resignation and of a life reduced to the simplest and homeliest elements, as opposed to the fantastic pretensions of the antiquated heroine of the story. He wished to strike a certain exclusively human and personal note. He knew that for this purpose he was taking a license, but the point is that he felt he was not indulging in any extravagant violation of reality. Giving in a letter, about 1830, an account of a little journey he was making in Connecticut, he says, of the end of a seventeen miles' stage, that "in the evening, however, I went to a Bible-class with a very polite and agreeable gentleman, whom I afterwards discovered to be a strolling tailor of very questionable habits."

Hawthorne appears on various occasions to have absented himself from Salem, and to have wandered somewhat through the New England States. But the only one of these episodes of which there is a considerable account in the Note-Books is a visit that he paid in the summer of 1837 to his old college-mate, Horatio Bridge,²³ who was living upon his father's property in Maine, in company with an eccentric young Frenchman, a teacher of his native tongue, who was looking for pupils among the Northern forests. I have said that there was less psychology in Hawthorne's Journals than might have been looked for, but there is nevertheless a certain amount of it, and nowhere more than in a number of pages relating⁴⁰ to this remarkable "Monsieur S." (Hawthorne, intimate as he apparently became with him, always calls him "Monsieur," just as throughout all his Diaries he invariably speaks of all his friends, even the most familiar, as "Mr.") He confers the prefix upon the unconventional Thoreau, his fellow-woods-

man at Concord, and upon the emancipated brethren at Brook Farm.) These pages are completely occupied with Monsieur S., who was evidently a man of character, with the full complement of his national vivacity. There is an elaborate effort to analyse the poor young Frenchman's disposition, something conscientious and painstaking, respectful, explicit, almost solemn. These passages are very curious as a reminder of the absence of the off-hand element in the manner in which many Americans, and many New Englanders especially, make up their minds about people whom they meet. This, in turn, is a reminder of something that may be called the importance of the individual in the American world, which is a result of the newness and youthfulness of society, and of the absence of keen competition. The individual counts for more, as it were, and, thanks to the absence of a variety of social types and of settled heads under which he may be easily and conveniently pigeon-holed, he is to a certain extent a wonder and a mystery. An Englishman, a Frenchman—a Frenchman above all—judges quickly, easily, from his own social standpoint, and makes an end of it. He has not that rather chilly and isolated sense of moral responsibility which is apt to visit a New Englander in such processes, and he has the advantage that his standards are fixed by the general consent of the society in which he lives. A Frenchman, in this respect, is particularly happy and comfortable, happy and comfortable to a degree which I think is hardly to be over-estimated, his standards being the most definite in the world, the most easily and promptly appealed to, and the most identical with what happens to be the practice of the French genius itself. The Englishman is not quite so well off, but he is better off than his poor interrogative and tentative cousin beyond the seas. He is blessed with a healthy mistrust of analysis, and hair-splitting is the occupation he most despises. There is always a little of the Dr. Johnson in him, and Dr. Johnson would have had wofully little patience with that tendency to weigh moonbeams which in Hawthorne was almost as much a quality of race as of genius, albeit that Hawthorne has paid to Boswell's hero (in the chapter on "Lichfield and Uttoxeter," in his volume on England) a tribute of the finest appreciation. American intellectual standards are vague, and Hawthorne's countrymen are apt to hold the scales with a rather uncertain hand and a somewhat agitated conscience.

²³ Horatio Bridge (1806-93), Hawthorne's Bowdoin College classmate, became a naval officer. Hawthorne edited his *Journal of an African Cruise*, 1845.

that. He had none the less become in a manner the fashion; the critics at least had put on a spurt and caught up with him. We had found out at last how clever he was, and he had had to make the best of the loss of his mystery. I was strongly tempted, as I walked beside him, to let him know how much of that unveiling was my act; and there was a moment when I probably should have done so had not one of the ladies of our party, snatching a place at his other elbow, just then appealed to him in a spirit comparatively selfish. It was very discouraging: I almost felt the liberty had been taken with myself.

I had had on my tongue's end, for my own part, a phrase or two about the right word at the right time; but later on I was glad not to have spoken, for when on our return we clustered at tea I perceived Lady Jane, who had not been out with us, brandishing *The Middle* with her longest arm. She had taken it up at her leisure; she was delighted with what she had found, and I saw that, as a mistake in a man may often be a felicity in a woman, she would practically do for me what I hadn't been able to do for myself. "Some sweet little truths that needed to be spoken," I heard her declare, thrusting the paper at rather a bewildered couple by the fireplace. She grabbed it away from them again on the reappearance of Hugh Vereker, who after our walk had been upstairs to change something. "I know you don't in general look at this kind of thing, but it's an occasion really for doing so. You *haven't* seen it? Then you must. The man has actually got *at* you, at what I always feel, you know." Lady Jane threw into her eyes a look evidently intended to give an idea of what she always felt; but she added that she couldn't have expressed it. The man in the paper expressed it in a striking manner. "Just see there, and there, where I've dashed it, how he brings it out." She had literally marked for him the brightest patches of my prose, and if I was a little amused Vereker himself may well have been. He showed how much he was when before us all Lady Jane wanted to read something aloud. I liked at any rate the way he defeated her purpose by jerking the paper affectionately out of her clutch. He'd take it upstairs with him and look at it on going to dress. He did this half an hour later—I saw it in his hand when he repaired to his room. That was the moment at which, thinking to give her pleasure, I mentioned to Lady Jane that I was the author of the review. I did give her pleasure,

I judged, but perhaps not quite so much as I had expected. If the author was "only me" the thing didn't seem quite so remarkable. Hadn't I had the effect rather of diminishing the lustre of the article than of adding to my own? Her ladyship was subject to the most extraordinary drops. It didn't matter; the only effect I cared about was the one it would have on Vereker up there by his bedroom fire.

At dinner I watched for the signs of this impression, tried to fancy some happier light in his eyes; but to my disappointment Lady Jane gave me no chance to make sure. I had hoped she'd call triumphantly down the table, publicly demand if she hadn't been right. The party was large—there were people from outside as well, but I had never seen a table long enough to deprive Lady Jane of a triumph. I was just reflecting in truth that this interminable board would deprive *me* of one when the guest next me, dear woman—she was Miss Poyle, the vicar's sister, a robust unmodulated person—had the happy inspiration and the unusual courage to address herself across it to Vereker, who was opposite, but not directly, so that when he replied they were both leaning forward. She inquired, artless body, what he thought of Lady Jane's "panegyric," which she had read—not connecting it however with her right-hand neighbour; and while I strained my ear for his reply I heard him, to my stupefaction, call back gaily, his mouth full of bread: "Oh, it's all right—the usual twaddle!"

I had caught Vereker's glance as he spoke, but Miss Poyle's surprise was a fortunate cover for my own. "You mean he doesn't do you justice?" said the excellent woman.

Vereker laughed out, and I was happy to be able to do the same. "It's a charming article," he tossed us.

Miss Poyle thrust her chin half across the cloth. "Oh you're so deep!" she drove home.

"As deep as the ocean! All I pretend is that the author doesn't see—" But a dish was at this point passed over his shoulder, and we had to wait while he helped himself.

"Doesn't see what?" my neighbour continued.

"Doesn't see anything."

"Dear me—how very stupid!"

"Not a bit," Vereker laughed again. "Nobody does."

The lady on his further side appealed to him and Miss Poyle sank back to myself. "Nobody sees any-

thing!" she cheerfully announced, to which I replied that I had often thought so too, but had somehow taken the thought for a proof on my own part of a tremendous eve. I didn't tell her the article was mine, and I observed that Lady Jane, occupied at the end of the table, had not caught Vereker's words.

I rather avoided him after dinner, for I confess he struck me as cruelly conceited, and the revelation was a pain. "The usual twaddle"—my acute little study! That one's admiration should have had a reserve or two could gall him to that point? I had thought him placid, and he was placid enough, such a surface was the hard polished glass that encased the bauble of his vanity. I was really ruffled, and the only comfort was that if nobody saw anything George Corvick was quite as much out of it as I. This comfort however was not sufficient, after the ladies had dispersed, to carry me in the proper manner—I mean in a spotted jacket and humming an air—into the smoking-room. I took my way in some dejection to bed, but in the passage I encountered Mr Vereker, who had been up once more to change, coming out of his room. He was humming an air and had on a spotted jacket, and as soon as he saw me his gaiety gave a start.

"My dear young man," he exclaimed, "I'm so glad to lay hands on you! I'm afraid I most unwittingly wounded you by those words of mine at dinner to Miss Poyle. I learned but half an hour ago from Lady Jane that you're the author of the little notice in *The Middle*."

I protested that no bones were broken, but he moved with me to my own door, his hand, on my shoulder, kindly feeling for a fracture, and on hearing that I had come up to bed he asked leave to cross my threshold and just tell me in three words what his qualification of my remarks had represented. It was plain he really feared I was hurt, and the sense of his solicitude suddenly made all the difference to me. My cheap review fluttered off into space, and the best things I had said in it became flat enough beside the brilliancy of his being there. I can see him there still, on my rug, in the firelight and his spotted jacket, his fine clear face all bright with the desire to be tender to my youth. I don't know what he had at first meant to say, but I think the sight of my relief touched him, excited him, brought up words to his lips from far within. It was so these words presently conveyed to me something that, as I afterwards knew, he had

never uttered to any one. I've always done justice to the generous impulse that made him speak, it was simply compunction for a snub unconsciously administered to a man of letters in a position inferior to his own, a man of letters moreover in the very act of praising him. To make the thing right he talked to me exactly as an equal and on the ground of what we both loved best. The hour, the place, the unexpectedness deepened the impression he couldn't have done anything more intensely effective.

III

"I don't quite know how to explain it to you," he said, "but it was the very fact that your notice of my book had a spice of intelligence, it was just your exceptional sharpness, that produced the feeling—a very old story with me, I beg you to believe—under the momentary influence of which I used in speaking to that good lady the words you so naturally resent. I don't read the things in the newspapers unless they're thrust upon me as that one was—it's always one's best friend who does it! But I used to read them sometimes—ten years ago. I dare say they were in general rather stupider then, at any rate it always struck me they missed my little point with a perfection exactly as admirable when they patted me on the back as when they kicked me in the shins. Whenever since I've happened to have a glimpse of them they were still blazing away—still missing it, I mean, deliciously. You miss it, my dear fellow, with inimitable assurance, the fact of your being awfully clever and your article's being awfully nice doesn't make a hair's breadth of difference. It's quite with you rising young men," Vereker laughed, "that I feel most what a failure I am!"

I listened with keen interest, it grew keener as he talked. "You a failure—heavens! What then may your 'little point' happen to be?"

"Have I got to tell you, after all these years and labours?" There was something in the friendly reproach of this—jocosely exaggerated—that made me, as an ardent young seeker for truth, blush to the roots of my hair. I'm as much in the dark as ever, though I've grown used in a sense to my obtuseness; at that moment, however, Vereker's happy accent made me appear to myself, and probably to him, a rare dunce. I was on the point of exclaiming "Ah yes, don't tell me for my honour, for that of the

craft, don't!" when he went on in a manner that showed he had read my thought and had his own idea of the probability of our some day redeeming ourselves. "By my little point I mean—what shall I call it?—the particular thing I've written my books most *for*. Isn't there for every writer a particular thing of that sort, the thing that most makes him apply himself, the thing without the effort to achieve which he wouldn't write at all, the very passion of his passion, the part of the business in which, for him, ¹⁰ the flame of art burns most intensely? Well, it's *that*!"

I considered a moment—that is I followed at a respectful distance, rather gasping. I was fascinated—easily, you'll say; but I wasn't going after all to be put off my guard. "Your description's certainly beautiful, but it doesn't make what you describe very distinct."

"I promise you it would be distinct if it should dawn on you at all." I saw that the charm of our ²⁰ topic overflowed for my companion into an emotion as lively as my own. "At any rate," he went on, "I can speak for myself: there's an idea in my work without which I wouldn't have given a straw for the whole job. It's the finest fullest intention of the lot, and the application of it has been, I think, a triumph of patience, of ingenuity. I ought to leave that to somebody else to say; but that nobody does say it is precisely what we're talking about. It stretches, this little trick of mine, from book to book, and every- ³⁰ thing else, comparatively, plays over the surface of it. The order, the form, the texture of my books will perhaps some-day constitute for the initiated a complete representation of it. So it's naturally the thing for the critic to look for. It strikes me," my visitor added, smiling, "even as the thing for the critic to find."

This seemed a responsibility indeed. "You call it a little trick?"

"That's only my little modesty. It's really an ex- ⁴⁰ quisite scheme."

"And you hold that you've carried the scheme out?"

"The way I've carried it out is the thing in life I think a bit well of myself for."

I had a pause. "Don't you think you ought—just a trifle—to assist the critic?"

"Assist him? What else have I done with every stroke of my pen? I've shouted my intention in his

great blank face!" At this, laughing out again, Vereker laid his hand on my shoulder to show the allusion wasn't to my personal appearance.

"But you talk about the initiated. There must therefore, you see, be initiation."

"What else in heaven's name is criticism supposed to be?" I'm afraid I coloured at this too; but I took refuge in repeating that his account of his silver lining was poor in something or other that a plain man knows things by. "That's only because you've never had a glimpse of it," he returned. "If you had had one the element in question would soon have become practically all you'd see. To me it's exactly as palpable as the marble of this chimney. Besides, the critic just *isn't* a plain man: if he were, pray, what would he be doing in his neighbour's garden? You're anything but a plain man yourself, and the very *raison d'être* of you all is that you're little demons of subtlety. If my great affair's a secret, that's only because it's a secret in spite of itself—the amazing event has made it one. I not only never took the smallest precaution to keep it so, but never dreamed of any such accident. If I had I shouldn't in advance have had the heart to go on. As it was, I only became aware little by little, and meanwhile I had done my work."

"And now you quite like it?" I risked.

"My work?"

"Your secret. It's the same thing."

"Your guessing that," Vereker replied. "is a proof that you're as clever as I say!" I was encouraged by this to remark that he would clearly be pained to part with it, and he confessed that it was indeed with him now the great amusement of life. "I live almost to see if it will ever be detected." He looked at me for a jesting challenge; something far within his eyes seemed to peep out. "But I needn't worry—it won't!"

"You fire me as I've never been fired," I declared; "you make me determined to do or die." Then I asked: "Is it a kind of esoteric message?"

His countenance fell at this—he put out his hand as if to bid me good-night. "Ah my dear fellow, it can't be described in cheap journalese!"

I knew of course he'd be awfully fastidious, but our talk had made me feel how much his nerves were exposed. I was unsatisfied—I kept hold of his hand. "I won't make use of the expression then," I said, "in the article in which I shall eventually announce

my discovery, though I dare say I shall have hard work to do without it. But meanwhile, just to hasten that difficult birth, can't you give a fellow a clue?" I felt much more at my ease.

"My whole lucid effort gives him the clue—every page and line and letter. The thing's as concrete there as a bird in a cage, a bait on a hook, a piece of cheese in a mouse-trap. It's stuck into every volume as your foot is stuck into your shoe. It governs every line, it chooses every word, it dots every *i*, it places *10* every comma."

I scratched my head. "Is it something in the style or something in the thought? An element of form or an element of feeling?"

He indulgently shook my hand again, and I felt my questions to be crude and my distinctions pitiful. "Good-night, my dear boy—don't bother about it. After all, you do like a fellow."

"And a little intelligence might spoil it?" I still detained him.

He hesitated. "Well, you've got a heart in your body. Is that an element of form or an element of feeling? What I counted that nobody has ever mentioned in my work is the organ of life."

"I see—it's some idea *about* life, some sort of philosophy. Unless it be," I added with the eagerness of a thought perhaps still happier, "some kind of game you're up to with your style, something you're after in the language. Perhaps it's a preference for the letter P!" I ventured profanely to break out. "Papa, *30* potatoes, pines—that sort of thing?" He was suitably indulgent. He only said I hadn't got the right letter. But his amusement was over, I could see he was bored. There was nevertheless something else I had absolutely to learn. "Should you be able, pen in hand, to state it clearly yourself—to name it, phrase it, formulate it?"

"Oh," he almost passionately sighed, "if I were only, pen in hand, one of *you* chaps!"

"That would be a great chance for you of course. *40* But why should you despise us chaps for not doing what you can't do yourself?"

"Can't do?" He opened his eyes. "Haven't I done it in twenty volumes? I do it in my way," he continued. "Go *you* and do it in yours."

"Ours is so devilish difficult," I weakly observed.

"So's mine! We each choose our own. There's no compulsion. You won't come down and smoke?"

"No. I want to think this thing out."

"You'll tell me then in the morning that you've laid me bare?"

"I'll see what I can do, I'll sleep on it. But just one word more," I added. We had left the room—I walked again with him a few steps along the passage. "This extraordinary 'general intention,' as you call it—for that's the most vivid description I can induce you to make of it—is then, generally, a sort of buried treasure?"

His face lighted. "Yes, call it that, though it's perhaps not for me to do so."

"Nonsense!" I laughed. "You know you're hugely proud of it."

"Well, I didn't propose to tell you so, but it *is* the joy of my soul!"

"You mean it's a beauty so rare, so great?"

He waited a little again. "The loveliest thing in the world!" We had stopped, and on these words he left me, but at the end of the corridor, while I *20* looked after him rather yearningly, he turned and caught sight of my puzzled face. It made him earnestly, indeed I thought quite anxiously, shake his head and wave his finger. "Give it up—give it up!"

This wasn't a challenge—it was fatherly advice. If I had had one of his books at hand I'd have repeated my recent act of faith—I'd have spent half the night with him. At three o'clock in the morning, not sleeping, remembering moreover how indispensable he was to Lady Jane, I stole down to the library with a candle. There wasn't, so far as I could discover, a line of his writing in the house.

IV

Returning to town I feverishly collected them all, I picked out each in its order and held it up to the light. This gave me a maddening month, in the course of which several things took place. One of these, the last, I may as well immediately mention, was that I acted on Verker's advice. I renounced my ridiculous attempt. I could really make nothing of the business, it proved a dead loss. After all I had always, as he had himself noted, liked him; and what now occurred was simply that my new intelligence and vain preoccupation damaged my liking. I not only failed to run a general intention to earth, I found myself missing the subordinate intentions I had formerly enjoyed. His books didn't even remain the charming things they had been for me, the exasperation of my search put me out of conceit of

them. Instead of being a pleasure the more they became a resource the less: for from the moment I was unable to follow up the author's hint I of course felt it a point of honour not to make use professionally of my knowledge of them. I *had* no knowledge—nobody had any. It was humiliating, but I could bear it—they only annoyed me now. At last they even bored me, and I accounted for my confusion—perversely. I allow—by the idea that Vereker had made a fool of me. The buried treasure was a bad joke, the general intention a monstrous *pose*.

The great point of it all is, however, that I told George Corvick what had befallen me and that my information had an immense effect on him. He had at last come back, but so, unfortunately, had Mrs. Erme, and there was as yet, I could see, no question of his nuptials. He was immensely stirred up by the anecdote I had brought from Bridges; it fell in so completely with the sense he had had from the first that there was more in Vereker than met the eye. 20 When I remarked that the eye seemed what the printed page had been expressly invented to meet he immediately accused me of being spiteful because I had been foiled. Our commerce had always that pleasant latitude. The thing Vereker had mentioned to me was exactly the thing he, Corvick, had wanted me to speak of in my review. On my suggesting at last that with the assistance I had now given him he would doubtless be prepared to speak of it himself he admitted freely that before doing this there was 30 more he must understand. What he would have said, had he reviewed the new book, was that there was evidently in the writer's inmost art something to be understood. I hadn't so much as hinted at that: no wonder the writer hadn't been flattered! I asked Corvick what he really considered he meant by his own supersubtlety, and, unmistakably kindled, he replied: "It isn't for the vulgar—it isn't for the vulgar!" He had hold of the tail of something: he would pull hard, pull it right out. He pumped me 40 dry on Vereker's strange confidence and, pronouncing me the luckiest of mortals, mentioned half-a-dozen questions he wished to goodness I had had the gumption to put. Yet on the other hand he didn't want to be told too much—it would spoil the fun of seeing what would come. The failure of *my* fun was at the moment of our meeting not complete, but I saw it ahead, and Corvick saw that I saw it. I, on my side, saw likewise that one of the first

things he would do would be to rush off with my story to Gwendolen.

On the very day after my talk with him I was surprised by the receipt of a note from Hugh Vereker, to whom our encounter at Bridges had been recalled, as he mentioned, by his falling in a magazine on some article to which my signature was attached. "I read it with great pleasure," he wrote, "and remembered under its influence our lively conversation by your bedroom fire. The consequence of this has been that I begin to measure the temerity of my having saddled you with a knowledge that you may find something of a burden. Now that the fit's over I can't imagine how I came to be moved so much beyond my wont. I had never before mentioned, no matter in what state of expansion, the fact of my little secret, and I shall never speak of that mystery again. I was accidentally so much more explicit with you than it had ever entered into my game to be, that I find this game—I mean the pleasure of playing it—suffers considerably. In short, if you can understand it, I've rather spoiled my sport. I really don't want to give anybody what I believe you clever young men call the tip. That's of course a selfish solicitude, and I name it to you for what it may be worth to you. If you're disposed to humour me don't repeat my revelation. Think me demented—it's your right; but don't tell anybody why."

The sequel to his communication was that as early on the morrow as I dared I drove straight to Mr. Vereker's door. He occupied in those years one of the honest old houses in Kensington Square. He received me immediately, and as soon as I came in I saw I hadn't lost my power to minister to his mirth. He laughed out at sight of my face, which doubtless expressed my perturbation. I had been indiscreet—my compunction was great. "I *have* told somebody," I panted, "and I'm sure that person will by this time have told somebody else! It's a woman, into the bargain."

"The person you've told?"

"No, the other person. I'm quite sure he must have told her."

"For all the good it will do her—or do *me*! A woman will never find out."

"No, but she'll talk all over the place: she'll do just what you don't want."

Vereker thought a moment, but wasn't so disconcerted as I had feared: he felt that if the harm was

done it only served him right. "It doesn't matter—don't worry."

"I'll do my best, I promise you, that your talk with me shall go no further."

"Very good, do what you can."

"In the meantime," I pursued, "George Corvick's possession of the tip may, on his part, really lead to something."

"That will be a brave day."

I told him about Corvick's cleverness, his admiration, the intensity of his interest in my anecdote, and without making too much of the divergence of our respective estimates mentioned that my friend was already of opinion that he saw much further into a certain affair than most people. He was quite as fired as I had been at Bridges. He was moreover in love with the young lady perhaps the two together would puzzle something out.

Vereker seemed struck with this. "Do you mean they're to be married?"

"I dare say that's what it will come to."

"That may help them," he conceded, "but we must give them time!"

I spoke of my own renewed assault and confessed my difficulties, whereupon he repeated his former advice. "Give it up, give it up!" He evidently didn't think me intellectually equipped for the adventure. I stayed half an hour, and he was most good-natured, but I couldn't help pronouncing him a man of unstable moods. He had been free with me in a mood, 30 he had repented in a mood, and now in a mood he had turned indifferent. This general levity helped me to believe that, so far as the subject of the tip went, there wasn't much in it. I contrived however to make him answer a few more questions about it, though he did so with visible impatience. For himself, beyond doubt, the thing we were all so blank about was vividly there. It was something, I guessed, in the primal plan, something like a complex figure in a Persian carpet. He highly approved of this image 40 when I used it, and he used another himself. "It's the very thing," he said, "that my pearls are strung on!" The reason of his note to me had been that he really didn't want to give us a grain of succour—our density was a thing too perfect in its way to touch. He had formed the habit of depending on it, and if the spell was to break it must break by some force of its own. He comes back to me from that last occasion—for I was never to speak to him again—as a

man with some safe preserve for sport. I wondered as I walked away where he had got *his* tip.

v

When I spoke to George Corvick of the caution I had received he made me feel that any doubt of his delicacy would be almost an insult. He had instantly told Gwendolen, but Gwendolen's ardent response was in itself a pledge of discretion. The question would now absorb them and would offer them a pastime too precious to be shared with the crowd. They appeared to have caught instinctively at Vereker's high idea of enjoyment. Their intellectual pride, however, was not such as to make them indifferent to any further light I might throw on the affair they had in hand. They were indeed of the "artistic temperament," and I was freshly struck with my colleague's power to excite himself over a question of art. He'd call it letters, he'd call it life, but it was 20 all one thing. In what he said I now seemed to understand that he spoke equally for Gwendolen, to whom as soon as Mrs. Erme was sufficiently better to allow her a little leisure, he made a point of introducing me. I remember our going together one Sunday in August to a huddled house in Chelsea, and my renewed envy of Corvick's possession of a friend who had some light to mingle with his own. He could say things to her that I could never say to him. She had indeed no sense of humour and, with her pretty way of holding her head on one side, was one of those persons whom you want, as the phrase is, to shake, but who have learnt Hungarian by themselves. She conversed perhaps in Hungarian with Corvick, she had remarkably little English for his friend. Corvick afterwards told me that I had chilled her by my apparent indisposition to oblige them with the detail of what Vereker had said to me. I allowed that I felt I had given thought enough to that indication—hadn't I even made up my mind 40 that it was vain and would lead nowhere? The importance they attached to it was irritating and quite envenomed my doubts.

That statement looks unamiable, and what probably happened was that I felt humiliated at seeing other persons deeply beguiled by an experiment that had brought me only chagrin. I was out in the cold while, by the evening fire, under the lamp, they followed the chase for which I myself had sounded the horn. They did as I had done, only more deliberately.

and sociably—they went over their author from the beginning. There was no hurry. Corvick said—the future was before them and the fascination could only grow; they would take him page by page, as they would take one of the classics, inhale him in slow draughts and let him sink all the way in. They would scarce have got so wound up, I think, if they hadn't been in love: poor Vereker's inner meaning gave them endless occasion to put and to keep their young heads together. None the less it represented the kind of problem for which Corvick had a special aptitude, drew out the particular pointed patience of which, had he lived, he would have given more striking and, it is to be hoped, more fruitful examples. He at least was, in Vereker's words, a little demon of subtlety. We had begun by disputing, but I soon saw that without my stirring a finger his infatuation would have its bad hours. He would bound off on false scents as I had done—he would clap his hands over new lights and see them blown out by the wind of the turned page. He was like nothing, I told him, but the maniacs who embrace some bedlamitical theory of the cryptic character of Shakespeare. To this he replied that if we had had Shakespeare's own word for his being cryptic he would at once have accepted it. The case there was altogether different—we had nothing but the word of Mr. Snooks. I returned that I was stupefied to see him attach such importance even to the word of Mr. Vereker. He wanted thereupon to know if I treated Mr. Vereker's word as a lie. I wasn't perhaps prepared, in my unhappy rebound, to go so far as that, but I insisted that till the contrary was proved I should view it as too fond an imagination. I didn't, I confess, say—I didn't at that time quite know—all I felt. Deep down, as Miss Erme would have said, I was uneasy, I was expectant. At the core of my disconcerted state—for my wonted curiosity lived in its ashes—was the sharpness of a sense that Corvick would at last probably come out somewhere. He made, in defence of his credulity, a great point of the fact that from of old, in his study of this genius, he had caught whiffs and hints of he didn't know what, faint wandering notes of a hidden music. That was just the rarity, that was the charm: it fitted so perfectly into what I reported.

If I returned on several occasions to the little house in Chelsea I dare say it was as much for news of Vereker as for news of Miss Erme's ailing parent.

The hours spent there by Corvick were present to my fancy as those of a chessplayer bent with a silent scowl, all the lamplit winter, over his board and his moves. As my imagination filled it out the picture held me fast. On the other side of the table was a ghostlier form, the faint figure of an antagonist good-humouredly but a little wearily secure—an antagonist who leaned back in his chair with his hands in his pockets and a smile on his fine clear face. Close to Corvick, behind him, was a girl who had begun to strike me as pale and wasted and even, on more familiar view, as rather handsome, and who rested on his shoulder and hung on his moves. He would take up a chessman and hold it poised a while over one of the little squares, and then would put it back in its place with a long sigh of disappointment. The young lady, at this, would slightly but uneasily shift her position and look across, very hard, very long, very strangely, at their dim participant. I had asked them at an early stage of the business if it mightn't contribute to their success to have some closer communication with him. The special circumstances would surely be held to have given me a right to introduce them. Corvick immediately replied that he had no wish to approach the altar before he had prepared the sacrifice. He quite agreed with our friend both as to the delight and as to the honour of the chase—he would bring down the animal with his own rifle. When I asked him if Miss Erme were as keen a shot he said after thinking: "No. I'm ashamed to say she wants to set a trap. She'd give anything to see him; she says she requires another tip. She's really quite morbid about it. But she must play fair—she *shan't* see him!" he emphatically added. I wondered if they hadn't even quarrelled a little on the subject—a suspicion not corrected by the way he more than once exclaimed to me: "She's quite incredibly literary, you know—quite fantastically!" I remember his saying of her that she felt in italics and thought in capitals. "Oh when I've run him to earth," he also said, "then, you know, I shall knock at his door. Rather—I beg you to believe, I'll have it from his own lips: 'Right you are, my boy; you've done it this time!' He shall crown me victor—with the critical laurel."

Meanwhile he really avoided the chances London life might have given him of meeting the distinguished novelist; a danger, however, that disappeared with Vereker's leaving England for an indefinite ab-

sence, as the newspapers announced—going to the south for motives connected with the health of his wife, which had long kept her in retirement. A year—more than a year—had elapsed since the incident at Bridges, but I had had no further sight of him. I think I was at bottom rather ashamed—I hated to remind him that, though I had irremediably missed his point, a reputation for acuteness was rapidly overtaking me. This scruple led me a dance, kept me out of Lady Jane's house, made me even decline, when in spite of my bad manners she was a second time so good as to make me a sign, an invitation to her beautiful seat. I once became aware of her under Vercker's escort at a concert, and was sure I was seen by them, but I slipped out without being caught. I felt, as on that occasion I splashed along in the rain, that I couldn't have done anything else, and yet I remember saying to myself that it was hard, was even cruel. Not only had I lost the books, but I had lost the man himself—they and their author²⁰ had been alike spoiled for me. I knew too which was the loss I most regretted. I had taken to the man still more than I had ever taken to the books.

VI

Six months after our friend had left England George Corvick, who made his living by his pen, contracted for a piece of work which imposed on him an absence of some length and a journey of some difficulty, and his undertaking of which was much of a surprise to me. His brother-in-law had become editor of a great provincial paper, and the great provincial paper, in a fine flight of fancy, had conceived the idea of sending a "special commissioner" to India. Special commissioners had begun, in the "metropolitan press," to be the fashion, and the journal in question must have felt it had passed too long for a mere country cousin. Corvick had no hand, I knew, for the big brush of the correspondent, but that was his brother-in-law's affair, and the fact that a particular task was not in his line was apt to be with himself exactly a reason for accepting it. He was prepared to out-Herod the metropolitan press, he took solemn precautions against priggishness, he exquisitely outraged taste. Nobody ever knew it—that offended principle was all his own. In addition to his expenses he was to be conveniently paid, and I found myself able to help him, for the usual fat book, to a plausible arrangement with the usual fat publisher. I naturally

inferred that his obvious desire to make a little money was not unconnected with the prospect of a union with Gwendolen Erme. I was aware that her mother's opposition was largely addressed to his want of means and of lucrative abilities, but it so happened that, on my saying the last time I saw him something that bore on the question of his separation from our young lady, he brought out with an emphasis that startled me: "Ah I'm not a bit engaged to her, you know!"

"Not overtly," I answered, "because her mother doesn't like you. But I've always taken for granted a private understanding."

"Well, there was one. But there isn't now." That was all he said save something about Mrs. Erme's having got on her feet again in the most extraordinary way—a remark pointing, as I supposed, the moral that private understandings were of little use when the doctor didn't share them. What I took the liberty to more closely infer was that the girl might in some way have estranged him. Well, if he had taken the turn of jealousy, for instance, it could scarcely be jealousy of me. In that case—over and above the absurdity of it—he wouldn't have gone away just to leave us together. For some time before his going we had indulged in no allusion to the buried treasure, and from his silence, which my reserve simply emulated, I had drawn a sharp conclusion. His courage had dropped, his ardour had gone the way of mine—this appearance at least he left me to scan. More than that he couldn't do, he couldn't face the triumph with which I might have greeted an explicit admission. He needn't have been afraid, poor dear, for I had by this time lost all need to triumph. In fact I considered I showed magnanimity in not reproaching him with his collapse, for the sense of his having thrown up the game made me feel more than ever how much I at last depended on him. If Corvick had broken down I should never know; no one would be of any use if *he* wasn't. It wasn't a bit true I had ceased to care for knowledge, little by little my curiosity not only had begun to ache again, but had become the familiar torment of my days and my nights. There are doubtless people to whom torments of such an order appear hardly more natural than the contortions of disease, but I don't after all know why I should in this connexion so much as mention them. For the few persons, at any rate, abnormal or not, with whom my anecdote is con-

cerned, literature was a game of skill, and skill meant courage, and courage meant honour, and honour meant passion, meant life. The stake on the table was a special substance and our roulette the revolving mind, but we sat round the green board as intently as the grim gamblers at Monte Carlo. Gwendolen Erme, for that matter, with her white face and her fixed eyes, was of the very type of the lean ladies one had met in the temples of chance. I recognised in Corvick's absence that she made this analogy vivid. 10 It was extravagant, I admit, the way she lived for the art of the pen. Her passion visibly preyed on her, and in her presence I felt almost tepid. I got hold of "Deep Down" again: it was a desert in which she had lost herself, but in which too she had dug a wonderful hole in the sand—a cavity out of which Corvick had still more remarkably pulled her.

Early in March I had a telegram from her, in consequence of which I repaired immediately to Chelsea, where the first thing she said to me was: "He has got 20 it, he has got it!"

She was moved, as I could see, to such depths that she must mean the great thing. "Vercker's idea?"

"His general intention. George has cabled from Bombay."

She had the missive open there; it was emphatic though concise. "Eureka. Immense." That was all—he had saved the cost of the signature. I shared her emotion, but I was disappointed. "He doesn't say what it is."

"How could he—in a telegram? He'll write it."

"But how does he know?"

"Know it's the real thing? Oh I'm sure that when you see it you do know. *Vera incessu patuit dea!*" 37

"It's you, Miss Erme, who are a 'dear' for bringing me such news!"—I went all lengths in my high spirits. "But fancy finding our goddess in the temple of Vishnu! How strange of George to have been able to go into the thing again in the midst of such different and such powerful solicitations!"

"He hasn't gone into it, I know; it's the thing itself, let severely alone for six months, that has simply sprung out of him like a tigress out of the jungle. He didn't take a book with him—on purpose; indeed he wouldn't have needed to—he knows every page, as I do, by heart. They all worked in him together, and some day somewhere, when he wasn't thinking, they fell, in all their superb intricacy, into

the one right combination. The figure in the carpet came out. That's the way he knew it would come and the real reason—you didn't in the least understand, but I suppose I may tell you now—why he went and why I consented to his going. We knew the change would do it—that the difference of thought, of scene, would give the needed touch, the magic shake. We had perfectly, we had admirably calculated. The elements were all in his mind, and in the *secousse* 38 of a new and intense experience they just struck light." She positively struck light herself—she was literally, facially luminous. I stammered something about unconscious cerebration, and she continued: "He'll come right home—this will bring him."

"To see Vereker, you mean?"

"To see Vereker—and to see *me*. Think what he'll have to tell me!"

I hesitated. "About India?"

"About fiddlesticks! About Vereker—about the figure in the carpet."

"But, as you say, we shall surely have that in a letter."

She thought like one inspired, and I remembered how Corvick had told me long before that her face was interesting. "Perhaps it can't be got into a letter if it's 'immense.'"

"Perhaps not if it's immense bosh. If he has hold of something that can't be got into a letter he hasn't hold of *the* thing. Vereker's own statement to me 30 was exactly that the 'figure' *would* fit into a letter."

"Well, I cabled to George an hour ago—two words," said Gwendolen.

"Is it indiscreet of me to ask what they were?"

She hung fire, but at last brought them out. "Angel, write."

"Good!" I cried. "I'll make it sure—I'll send him the same."

VII

40 My words however were not absolutely the same—I put something instead of "angel"; and in the sequel my epithet seemed the more apt, for when eventually we heard from our traveller it was merely, it was thoroughly to be tantalised. He was magnificent in his triumph, he described his discovery as stupendous; but his ecstasy only obscured it—there were to be no particulars till he should have submitted his conception to the supreme authority. He had thrown

37 "The proper approach revealed the deity."

38 Shock.

up his commission, he had thrown up his book, he had thrown up everything but the instant need to hurry to Rapallo, on the Genoese shore, where Vereker was making a stay. I wrote him a letter which was to await him at Aden—I besought him to relieve my suspense. That he had found my letter was indicated by a telegram which, reaching me after weary days and in the absence of any answer to my laconic dispatch to him at Bombay, was evidently intended as a reply to both communications. Those few words were in familiar French, the French of the day, which Corvick often made use of to show he wasn't a pug. It had for some persons the opposite effect, but his message may fairly be paraphrased: "Have patience, I want to see, as it breaks on you, the face you'll make!" "*Tellement envie de voir ta tête!*"—that was what I had to sit down with. I can certainly not be said to have sat down, for I seem to remember myself at this time as rattling constantly between the little house in Chelsea and my own. Our impatience, Gwendolen's and mine, was equal, but I kept hoping her light would be greater. We all spent during this episode, for people of our means, a great deal of money in telegrams and cabs, and I counted on the receipt of news from Rapallo immediately after the junction of the discoverer with the discovered. The interval seemed an age, but late one day I heard a hansom precipitated to my door with the crash engendered by a hint of liberality. I lived with my heart in my mouth and accordingly bounded to the window—a movement which gave me a view of a young lady erect on the footboard of the vehicle and eagerly looking up at my house. At sight of me she flourished a paper with a movement that brought me straight down, the movement with which, in melodrama, handkerchiefs and reprieves are flourished at the foot of the scaffold.

"Just seen Vereker—not a note wrong. Pressed me to bosom—keeps me a month." So much I read on her paper while the cabby dropped a grin from his perch. In my excitement I paid him profusely and in hers she suffered it, then as he drove away we started to walk about and talk. We had talked, heaven knows, enough before, but this was a wondrous lift. We pictured the whole scene at Rapallo, where he would have written, mentioning my name, for permission to call, that is I pictured it, having more maternal than my companion, whom I felt hang on my lips as we stopped on purpose before shop-

windows we didn't look into. About one thing we were clear: if he was staying on for fuller communication we should at least have a letter from him that would help us through the dregs of delay. We understood his staying on, and yet each of us saw, I think, that the other hated it. The letter we were clear about arrived, it was for Gwendolen, and I called on her in time to save her the trouble of bringing it to me. She didn't read it out, as was natural enough, but she repeated to me what it chiefly embodied. This consisted of the remarkable statement that he'd tell her after they were married exactly what she wanted to know.

"Only then, when I'm his wife—not before," she explained. "It's tantamount to saying—isn't it?—that I must marry him straight off!" She smiled at me while I flushed with disappointment, a vision of fresh delay that made me at first unconscious of my surprise. It seemed more than a hint that on me as well he would impose some tiresome condition. Suddenly, while she reported several more things from his letter, I remembered what he had told me before going away. He had found Mr. Vereker deliciously interesting and his own possession of the secret a real intoxication. The buried treasure was all gold and gems. Now that it was there it seemed to grow and grow before him, it would have been, through all time and taking all tongues, one of the most wonderful flowers of literary art. Nothing, in especial, once you were face to face with it, could show for more consummately *done*. When once it came out it came out, was there with a splendour that made you ashamed, and there hadn't been, save in the bottomless vulgarity of the age, with every one tasteless and tainted, every sense stopped. The smallest reason why it should have been overlooked. It was great, yet so simple, was simple, yet so great, and the final knowledge of it was an experience quite apart. He intimated that the charm of such an experience, the desire to drain it, in its freshness, to the last drop, was what kept him there close to the source. Gwendolen, frankly radiant as she tossed me these fragments, showed the elation of a prospect more assured than my own. That brought me back to the question of her marriage, prompted me to ask if what she meant by what she had just surprised me with was that she was under an engagement.

"Of course I am!" she answered. "Didn't you know it?" She seemed astonished, but I was still more so, for Corvick had told me the exact contrary.

I didn't mention this, however; I only reminded her how little I had been on that score in her confidence, or even in Corvick's, and that moreover I wasn't in ignorance of her mother's interdict. At bottom I was troubled by the disparity of the two accounts; but after a little I felt Corvick's to be the one I least doubted. This simply reduced me to asking myself if the girl had on the spot improvised an engagement—vamped up an old one or dashed off a new—in order to arrive at the satisfaction she desired. She must 10 have had resources of which I was destitute, but she made her case slightly more intelligible by returning presently: "What the state of things has been is that we felt of course bound to do nothing in mamma's lifetime."

"But now you think you'll just dispense with mamma's consent?"

"Ah it mayn't come to that!" I wondered what it might come to, and she went on: "Poor dear, she may swallow the dose. In fact, you know," she added 20 with a laugh, "she really *must*!"—a proposition of which, on behalf of every one concerned, I fully acknowledged the force.

VIII

Nothing more vexatious had ever happened to me than to become aware before Corvick's arrival in England that I shouldn't be there to put him through. I found myself abruptly called to Germany by the alarming illness of my younger brother, who, 30 against my advice, had gone to Munich to study, at the feet indeed of a great master, the art of portraiture in oils. The near relative who made him an allowance had threatened to withdraw it if he should, under specious pretexts, turn for superior truth to Paris—Paris being somehow, for a Cheltenham aunt, the school of evil, the abyss. I deplored this prejudice at the time, and the deep injury of it was now visible—first in the fact that it hadn't saved the poor boy, who was clever, frail and foolish, from congestion of 40 the lungs, and second in the greater break with London to which the event condemned me. I'm afraid that what was uppermost in my mind during several anxious weeks was the sense that if we had only been in Paris I might have run over to see Corvick. This was actually out of the question from every point of view: my brother, whose recovery gave us both plenty to do, was ill for three months, during which I never left him and at the end of which we

had to face the absolute prohibition of a return to England. The consideration of climate imposed itself, and he was in no state to meet it alone. I took him to Meran and there spent the summer with him, trying to show him by example how to get back to work and nursing a rage of another sort that I tried *not* to show him.

The whole business proved the first of a series of phenomena so strangely interlaced that, taken all together—which was how I had to take them—they form as good an illustration as I can recall of the manner in which, for the good of his soul doubtless, fate sometimes deals with a man's avidity. These incidents certainly had larger bearings than the comparatively meagre consequence we are here concerned with—though I feel that consequence also a thing to speak of with some respect. It's mainly in such a light, I confess, at any rate, that the ugly fruit of my exile is at this hour present to me. Even at first indeed the spirit in which my avidity, as I have called it, made me regard that term owed no element of case to the fact that before coming back from Rapallo George Corvick addressed me in a way I objected to. His letter had none of the sedative action I must to-day profess myself sure he had wished to give it, and the march of occurrences was not so ordered as to make up for what it lacked. He had begun on the spot, for one of the quarterlies, a great last word on Vereker's writings, and this exhaustive 50 study, the only one that would have counted, have existed, was to turn on the new light, to utter—oh so quietly!—the unimagined truth. It was in other words to trace the figure in the carpet through every convolution, to reproduce it, in every tint. The result, according to my friend, would be the greatest literary portrait ever painted, and what he asked of me was just to be so good as not to trouble him with questions till he should hang up his masterpiece before me. He did me the honour to declare that, putting aside the great sitter himself, all aloft in his indifference, I was individually the connoisseur he was most working for. I was therefore to be a good boy and not try to peep under the curtain before the show was ready: I should enjoy it all the more if I sat very still.

I did my best to sit very still, but I couldn't help giving a jump on seeing in *The Times*, after I had been a week or two in Munich and before, as I knew, Corvick had reached London, the announce-

ment of the sudden death of poor Mrs Erme I instantly, by letter, appealed to Gwendolen for particulars, and she wrote me that her mother had yielded to long-threatened failure of the heart. She didn't say, but I took the liberty of reading into her words, that from the point of view of her marriage and also of her eagerness, which was quite a match for mine, this was a solution more prompt than could have been expected and more radical than waiting for the old lady to swallow the dose. I candidly admit indeed that at the time—for I heard from her repeatedly—I read some singular things into Gwendolen's words and some still more extraordinary ones into her silences. Pen in hand, this way, I live the time over, and it brings back the oddest sense of my having been, both for months and in spite of myself, a kind of coerced spectator. All my life had taken refuge in my eyes, which the procession of events appeared to have committed itself to keep astare. There were days when I thought of writing to Hugh Vereker and simply throwing myself on his charity. But I felt more deeply that I hadn't fallen quite so low—besides which, quite properly, he would send me about my business. Mrs Erme's death brought Corvick straight home, and within the month he was united "very quietly"—as quietly, I seemed to make out, as he meant in his article to bring out his *trouvaille*³⁰—to the young lady he had loved and quitted. I use this last term, I may parenthetically say, because I subsequently grew sure that at the time he went to India, at the time of his great news from Bombay, there had been no positive pledge between them whatever. There had been none at the moment she was affirming to me the very opposite. On the other hand he had certainly become engaged the day he returned. The happy pair went down to Torquay for their honeymoon, and there, in a reckless hour, it occurred to poor Corvick to take his young bride on a drive. He had no command of that business: this had been brought home to me of old in a little tour we had once made together in a dogcart. In a dogcart he perched his companion for a rattle over Devonshire hills, on one of the likeliest of which he brought his horse, who, it was true, had bolted, down with such violence that the occupants of the cart were hurled forward and that he fell hornbly on his head. He was killed on the spot, Gwendolen escaped unhurt.

³⁰ Discovery.

I pass rapidly over the question of this unmitigated tragedy, of what the loss of my best friend meant for me, and I complete my little history of my patience and my pain by the frank statement of my having, in a postscript to my very first letter to her after the receipt of the hideous news, asked Mrs Corvick whether her husband mightn't at least have finished the great article on Vereker. Her answer was as prompt as my question: the article, which had been barely begun, was a mere heartbreaking scrap. She explained that our friend, abroad, had just settled down to it when interrupted by her mother's death, and that then, on his return, he had been kept from work by the engrossments into which that calamity was to plunge them. The opening pages were all that existed, they were striking, they were promising, but they didn't unveil the idol. That great intellectual feat was obviously to have formed his climax. She said nothing more, nothing to enlighten me as to the state of her own knowledge—the knowledge for the acquisition of which I had fancied her prodigiously acting. This was above all what I wanted to know: had *she* seen the idol unveiled? Had there been a private ceremony for a palpitating audience of one? For what else but that ceremony had the nuptials taken place? I didn't like as yet to press her, though when I thought of what had passed between us on the subject in Corvick's absence her reticence surprised me. It was therefore not till much later, from Meran, that I risked another appeal, risked it in some trepidation, for she continued to tell me nothing. "Did you hear in those few days of your blighted bliss," I wrote, "what we desired so to hear?" I said "we" as a little hint, and she showed me she could take a little hint. "I heard everything," she replied, "and I mean to keep it to myself!"

IX

It was impossible not to be moved with the strongest sympathy for her, and on my return to England I showed her every kindness in my power. Her mother's death had made her means sufficient, and she had gone to live in a more convenient quarter. But her loss had been great and her visitation cruel; it never would have occurred to me, moreover, to suppose she could come to feel the possession of a technical tip, of a piece of literary experience, a counterpoise to her grief. Strange to say, none the less, I couldn't help believing after I had seen her a few

times that I caught a glimpse of some such oddity. I hasten to add that there had been other things I couldn't help believing, or at least imagining; and as I never felt I was really clear about these, so, as to the point I here touch on, I give her memory the benefit of the doubt. Stricken and solitary, highly accomplished and now, in her deep mourning, her maturer grace and her uncomplaining sorrow, incontestably handsome, she presented herself as leading a life of singular dignity and beauty. I had at first found a way to persuade myself that I should soon get the better of the reserve formulated, the week after the catastrophe, in her reply to an appeal as to which I was not unconscious that it might strike her as mistimed. Certainly that reserve was something of a shock to me—certainly it puzzled me the more I thought of it and even though I tried to explain it (with moments of success) by an imputation of exalted sentiments, of superstitious scruples, of a refinement of loyalty. Certainly it added at the same time hugely to the price of Vereker's secret, precious as this mystery already appeared. I may as well confess abjectly that Mrs. Corvick's unexpected attitude was the final tap on the nail that was to fix fast my luckless idea, convert it into the obsession of which I'm for ever conscious.

But this only helped me the more to be artful, to be adroit, to allow time to elapse before renewing my suit. There were plenty of speculations for the interval, and one of them was deeply absorbing. Corvick had kept his information from his young friend till after the removal of the last barrier to their intimacy—then only had he let the cat out of the bag. Was it Gwendolen's idea, taking a hint from him, to liberate this animal only on the basis of the renewal of such a relation? Was the figure in the carpet traceable or describable only for husbands and wives—for lovers supremely united? It came back to me in a mystifying manner that in Kensington Square, when I mentioned that Corvick would have told the girl he loved, some word had dropped from Vereker that gave colour to this possibility. There might be little in it, but there was enough to make me wonder if I should have to marry Mrs. Corvick to get what I wanted. Was I prepared to offer her this price for the blessing of her knowledge? Ah that way madness lay!—so I at least said to myself in bewildered hours. I could see meanwhile the torch she refused to pass on flame away in her chamber of

memory—pour through her eyes a light that shone in her lonely house. At the end of six months I was fully sure of what this warm presence made up to her for. We had talked again and again of the man who had brought us together—of his talent, his character, his personal charm, his certain career, his dreadful doom, and even of his clear purpose in that great study which was to have been a supreme literary portrait, a kind of critical Vandyke or Velasquez. She had conveyed to me in abundance that she was tongue-tied by her perversity, by her piety, that she would never break the silence it had not been given to the "right person," as she said, to break. The hour, however, finally arrived. One evening when I had been sitting with her longer than usual I laid my hand firmly on her arm. "Now at last what is it?"

She had been expecting me and was ready. She gave a long slow soundless headshake, merciful only in being inarticulate. This mercy didn't prevent its hurling at me the largest finest coldest "Never!" I had yet, in the course of a life that had known denials, had to take full in the face. I took it and was aware that with the hard blow the tears had come into my eyes. So for a while we sat and looked at each other; after which I slowly rose. I was wondering if some day she would accept me; but this was not what I brought out. I said as I smoothed down my hat: "I know what to think then. It's nothing!"

A remote disdainful pity for me gathered in her dim smile; then she spoke in a voice that I hear at this hour. "It's my *life*!" As I stood at the door she added: "You've insulted him!"

"Do you mean Vereker?"

"I mean the Dead!"

I recognised when I reached the street the justice of her charge. Yes, it was her life—I recognised that too; but her life none the less made room with the lapse of time for another interest. A year and a half after Corvick's death she published in a single volume her second novel, "Overmastered," which I pounced on in the hope of finding in it some tell-tale echo or some peeping face. All I found was a much better book than her younger performance, showing I thought the better company she had kept. As a tissue tolerably intricate it was a carpet with a figure of its own; but the figure was not the figure I was looking for. On sending a review of it to *The Middle* I was surprised to learn from the office that a notice was already in type. When the paper came out I had no

hesitation in attributing this article, which I thought rather vulgarly overdone, to Drayton Deane, who in the old days had been something of a friend of Corvick's, yet had only within a few weeks made the acquaintance of his widow. I had had an early copy of the book, but Deane had evidently had an earlier. He lacked all the same the light hand with which Corvick had gilded the gingerbread—he laid on the tinsel in splashes

X

Six months later appeared "The Right of Way," the last chance, though we didn't know it, that we were to have to redeem ourselves. Written wholly during Vereker's sojourn abroad, the book had been heralded, in a hundred paragraphs, by the usual ineptitudes. I carried it, as early a copy as any, I this time flattered myself, straightway to Mrs. Corvick. This was the only use I had for it, I left the inevitable tribute of *The Middle* to some more ingenious mind²⁰ and some less irritated temper. "But I already have it," Gwendolen said. "Drayton Deane was so good as to bring it to me yesterday, and I've just finished it."

"Yesterday? How did he get it so soon?"

"He gets everything so soon! He's to review it in *The Middle*."

"He—Drayton Deane—review Vereker?" I couldn't believe my ears.

"Why not? One fine ignorance is as good as another."

I winced but I presently said "You ought to review him yourself!"

"I don't 'review,'" she laughed. "I'm reviewed!"

Just then the door was thrown open. "Ah yes, here's your reviewer!" Drayton Deane was there with his long legs and his tall forehead: he had come to see what she thought of "The Right of Way," and to bring news that was singularly relevant. The evening papers were just out with a telegram on the author of⁴⁰ that work, who, in Rome, has been ill for some days with an attack of malarial fever. It had at first not been thought grave, but had taken, in consequence of complications, a turn that might give rise to anxiety. Anxiety had indeed at the latest hour begun to be felt.

I was struck in the presence of these tidings with the fundamental detachment that Mrs. Corvick's overt concern quite failed to hide. It gave me the

measure of her consummate independence. That independence rested on her knowledge, the knowledge which nothing now could destroy and which nothing could make different. The figure in the carpet might take on another twist or two, but the sentence had virtually been written. The writer might go down to his grave: she was the person in the world to whom—as if she had been his favoured heir—his continued existence was least of a need. This reminded me how

¹⁰ I had observed at a particular moment—after Corvick's death—the drop of her desire to see him face to face. She had got what she wanted without that I had been sure that if she hadn't got it she wouldn't have been restrained from the endeavour to sound him personally by those superior reflexions, more conceivable on a man's part than on a woman's, which in my case had served as a deterrent. It wasn't however, I hasten to add, that my case, in spite of this invidious comparison, wasn't ambiguous enough. At the thought that Vereker was perhaps at that moment dying there rolled over me a wave of anguish—a poignant sense of how inconsistently I still depended on him. A delicacy that it was my one compensation to suffer to rule me had left the Alps and the Apennines between us, but the sense of the waning occasion suggested that I might in my despair at last have gone to him. Of course I should really have done nothing of the sort. I remained five minutes, while my companions talked of the new book, and when Drayton Deane appealed to me for my opinion of it I made answer, getting up, that I detested Hugh Vereker and simply couldn't read him. I departed with the moral certainty that as the door closed behind me Deane would brand me for awfully superficial. His hostess wouldn't contradict *that* at least.

I continue to trace with a briefer touch our intensely odd successions. Three weeks after this came Vereker's death, and before the year was out the death of his wife. That poor lady I had never seen, but I had had a futile theory that, should she survive him long enough to be decorously accessible, I might approach her with the feeble flicker of my plea. Did she know and if she knew would she speak? It was much to be presumed that for more reasons than one she would have nothing to say, but when she passed out of all reach I felt renouncement indeed my appointed lot. I was shut up in my obsession for ever—my gaolers had gone off with the key. I find myself

quite as vague as a captive in a dungeon about the time that further elapsed before Mrs. Corvick became the wife of Drayton Deane. I had foreseen, through my bars, this end of the business, though there was no indecent haste and our friendship had rather fallen off. They were both so "awfully intellectual" that it struck people as a suitable match, but I had measured better than any one the wealth of understanding the bride would contribute to the union. Never, for a marriage in literary circles—so the newspapers described the alliance—had a lady been so bravely dowered. I began with due promptness to look for the fruit of the affair—that fruit, I mean, of which the premonitory symptoms would be peculiarly visible in the husband. Taking for granted the splendour of the other party's nuptial gift, I expected to see him make a show commensurate with his increase of means. I knew what his means had been—his article on "The Right of Way" had distinctly given one the figure. As he was now exactly in the position 10 in which still more exactly I was not I watched from month to month, in the likely periodicals, for the heavy message poor Corvick had been unable to deliver and the responsibility of which would have fallen on his successor. The widow and wife would have broken by the rekindled hearth the silence that only a widow and wife might break, and Deane would be as aflame with the knowledge as Corvick in his own hour, as Gwendolen in hers, had been. Well, he was aflame doubtless, but the fire was apparently 20 not to become a public blaze. I scanned the periodicals in vain: Drayton Deane filled them with exuberant pages, but he withheld the page I most feverishly sought. He wrote on a thousand subjects, but never on the subject of Vereker. His special line was to tell truths that other people either "funked," as he said, or overlooked, but he never told the only truth that seemed to me in these days to signify. I met the couple in those literary circles referred to in the papers: I have sufficiently intimated that it was 30 only in such circles we were all constructed to revolve. Gwendolen was more than ever committed to them by the publication of her third novel, and I myself definitely classed by holding the opinion that this work was inferior to its immediate predecessor. Was it worse because she had been keeping worse company? If her secret was, as she had told me, her life—a fact discernible in her increasing bloom, an air of conscious privilege that, cleverly con-

rected by pretty charities, gave distinction to her appearance—it had yet not a direct influence on her work. That only made one—everything only made one—yearn the more for it; only rounded it off with a mystery finer and subtler.

XI

It was therefore from her husband I could never remove my eyes: I beset him in a manner that might have made him uneasy. I went even so far as to engage him in conversation. *Didn't* he know, hadn't he come into it as a matter of course?—that question hummed in my brain. Of course he knew; otherwise he wouldn't return my stare so queerly. His wife had told him what I wanted and he was amiably amused at my impotence. He didn't laugh—he wasn't a 10 laugher: his system was to present to my irritation, so that I should crudely expose myself, a conversational blank as vast as his big bare brow. It always happened that I turned away with a settled conviction from these unpeopled expanses, which seemed to complete each other geographically and to symbolise together Drayton Deane's want of voice, want of form. He simply hadn't the art to use what he knew; he literally was incompetent to take up the duty where Corvick had left it. I went still further—it was the only glimpse of happiness I had. I made up my mind that the duty didn't appeal to him. He wasn't interested, he didn't care. Yes, it quite comforted me to believe him too stupid to have joy of the thing I 20 lacked. He was as stupid after as he had been before, and that deepened for me the golden glory in which the mystery was wrapped. I had of course none the less to recollect that his wife might have imposed her conditions and exactions. I had above all to remind myself that with Vereker's death the major incentive dropped. He was still there to be honoured by what might be done—he was no longer there to give it his sanction. Who alas but he had the 30 authority?

Two children were born to the pair, but the second cost the mother her life. After this stroke I seemed to see another ghost of a chance. I jumped at it in thought, but I waited a certain time for manners, and at last my opportunity arrived in a remunerative way. His wife had been dead a year when I met Drayton Deane in the smoking-room of a small club of which we both were members, but where for months—perhaps because I rarely entered it—I

hadn't seen him. The room was empty and the occasion propitious. I deliberately offered him, to have done with the matter for ever, that advantage for which I felt he had long been looking.

"As an older acquaintance of your late wife's than even you were," I began, "you must let me say to you something I have on my mind. I shall be glad to make any terms with you that you see fit to name for the information she must have had from George Corvick—the information, you know, that had come to *him*, poor chap, in one of the happiest hours of his life, straight from Hugh Vereker."

He looked at me like a dim phrenological bust. "The information—?"

"Vereker's secret, my dear man—the general intention of his books: the string the pearls were strung on, the buried treasure, the figure in the carpet."

He began to flush—the numbers on his bumps to come out. "Vereker's books had a general intention?"

I stared in my turn. "You don't mean to say you don't know it?" I thought for a moment he was playing with me. "Mrs. Deane knew it; she had it, as I say, straight from Corvick, who had, after infinite search and to Vereker's own delight, found the very mouth of the cave. Where is the mouth? He told after their marriage—and told alone—the person who, when the circumstances were reproduced, must have told you. Have I been wrong in taking for granted that she admitted you, as one of the highest privileges of the relation in which you stood to her, to the knowledge of which she was after Corvick's death the sole depository? All I know is that that knowledge is infinitely precious, and what I want you to understand is that if you'll in your turn admit me to it you'll do me a kindness for which I shall be lastingly grateful."

He had turned at last very red; I dare say he had begun by thinking I had lost my wits. Little by little he followed me; on my own side I stared with a livelier surprise. Then he spoke. "I don't know what you're talking about."

He wasn't acting—it was the absurd truth. "She *didn't* tell you—?"

"Nothing about Hugh Vereker."

I was stupefied, the room went round. It had been too good even for that! "Upon your honour?"

"Upon my honour. What the devil's the matter with you?" he growled.

"I'm astounded—I'm disappointed. I wanted to get it out of you."

"It isn't *in me*!" he awkwardly laughed. "And even if it were—"

"If it were you'd let me have it—oh yes, in common humanity. But I believe you. I see—I see!" I went on, conscious, with the full turn of the wheel, of my great delusion, my false view of the poor man's attitude. What I saw, though I couldn't say it, was that his wife hadn't thought him worth enlightening. This struck me as strange for a woman who had thought him worth marrying. At last I explained it by the reflexion that she couldn't possibly have married him for his understanding. She had married him for something else.

He was to some extent enlightened now, but he was even more astonished, more disconcerted. He took a moment to compare my story with his quickened memories. The result of his meditation was his presently saying with a good deal of rather feeble form: "This is the first I hear of what you allude to. I think you must be mistaken as to Mrs. Drayton Deane's having had any unmentioned, and still less any unmentionable, knowledge of Hugh Vereker. She'd certainly have wished it—should it have borne on his literary character—to be used."

"It *was* used. She used it herself. She told me with her own lips that she 'lived' on it."

I had no sooner spoken than I repented of my words; he grew so pale that I felt as if I had struck him. "Ah 'lived'—!" he murmured, turning short away from me.

My compunction was real, I laid my hand on his shoulder. "I beg you to forgive me—I've made a mistake. You *don't* know what I thought you knew. You could, if I had been right, have rendered me a service, and I had my reasons for assuming that you'd be in a position to meet me."

"Your reasons?" he echoed. "What were your reasons?"

I looked at him well, I hesitated; I considered. "Come and sit down with me here and I'll tell you." I drew him to a sofa, I lighted another cigar and, beginning with the anecdote of Vereker's one descent from the clouds, I recited to him the extraordinary chain of accidents that had, in spite of the original gleam, kept me till that hour in the dark. I told him in a word just what I've written out here. He listened

with deepening attention, and I became aware, to my surprise, by his ejaculations, by his questions, that he would have been after all not unworthy to be trusted by his wife. So abrupt an experience of her want of trust had now a disturbing effect on him; but I saw the immediate shock throb away little by little and then gather again into waves of wonder and

curiosity—waves that promised, I could perfectly judge, to break in the end with the fury of my own highest tides. I may say that to-day as victims of unappeased desire there isn't a pin to choose between us. The poor man's state is almost my consolation; there are really moments when I feel it to be quite my revenge.

1896

*The Jolly Corner*³⁹

I

"Every one asks me what I 'think' of everything,"¹⁰ said Spencer Brydon; "and I make answer as I can—begging or dodging the question, putting them off with any nonsense. It wouldn't matter to any of them really," he went on, "for, even were it possible to meet in that stand-and-deliver way so silly a demand on so big a subject, my 'thoughts' would still be almost altogether about something that concerns only myself." He was talking to Miss Staverton, with whom for a couple of months now he had availed himself of every possible occasion to talk; this dis-²⁰position and this resource, this comfort and support, as the situation in fact presented itself, having promptly enough taken the first place in the considerable array of rather unattenuated surprises attending his so strangely belated return to America. Everything was somehow a surprise; and that might be natural when one had so long and so consistently neglected everything, taken pains to give surprises so much margin for play. He had given them more than thirty years—thirty-three, to be exact; and they now³⁰ seemed to him to have organised their performance quite on the scale of that licence. He had been twenty-three on leaving New York—he was fifty-six today: unless indeed he were to reckon as he had sometimes, since his repatriation, found himself feeling; in which case he would have lived longer than is often allotted to man. It would have taken a cen-

tury, he repeatedly said to himself, and said also to Alice Staverton, it would have taken a longer absence and a more averted mind than those even of which he had been guilty, to pile up the differences, the newnesses, the queernesses, above all the bignesses, for the better or the worse, that at present assaulted his vision wherever he looked.

The great fact all the while however had been the incalculability; since he *had* supposed himself, from decade to decade, to be allowing, and in the most liberal and intelligent manner, for brilliancy of change. He actually saw that he had allowed for nothing; he missed what he would have been sure of finding, he found what he would never have imagined. Proportions and values were upside-down; the ugly things he had expected, the ugly things of his far-away youth, when he had too promptly waked up to a sense of the ugly—these uncanny phenomena placed him rather, as it happened, under the charm; whereas the "swagger" things, the modern, the monstrous, the famous things, those he had more particularly, like thousands of ingenuous enquirers every³⁰ year, come over to see, were exactly his sources of dismay. They were as so many set traps for displeasure, above all for reaction, of which his restless tread was constantly pressing the spring. It was interesting, doubtless, the whole show, but it would have been too disconcerting hadn't a certain finer truth saved the situation. He had distinctly not, in this steadier light, come over *all* for the monstrosities; he

author's own biography. The "obscure hurt" which James suffered about the time of the beginning of the Civil War gave him the central "trauma" of his life, a sense of impotence, and made him feel inferior to his brilliant father and brother (William). It symbolized also to him the death of passion, and he withdrew to Europe. Fadiman thinks, following Rosenzweig, that this story dealing with the return of a Jamesian expatriate is "a working-out of the impulses of James's own unlived life." Or it may represent the crude America from which James attempted to escape.

³⁹ Published in *The English Review*, December, 1908, and reprinted in *Novels and Tales* (New York ed.), Vol. XVII; copyright 1909 by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937 by Henry James; used by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons. "The Jolly Corner" is one of James's later stories, and one of his most subtle and difficult for the reader. The puzzle is how much of James himself is in the story. Dr. Saul Rosenzweig, in "The Ghost of Henry James: A Study in Thematic Apperception," *Character and Personality*, Vol. XII, No. 2 (December, 1943), has interpreted the symbolism of the story in terms of the

had come, not only in the last analysis but quite on the face of the act, under an impulse with which they had nothing to do. He had come—putting the thing pompously—to look at his “property,” which he had thus for a third of a century not been within four thousand miles of, or, expressing it less sordidly, he had yielded to the humour of seeing again his house on the jolly corner, as he usually, and quite fondly, described it—the one in which he had first seen the light, in which various members of his family had lived and had died, in which the holidays of his overschooled boyhood had been passed and the few social flowers of his chilled adolescence gathered, and which, alienated then for so long a period, had, through the successive deaths of his two brothers and the termination of old arrangements, come wholly into his hands. He was the owner of another, not quite so “good”—the jolly corner having been, from far back, superlatively extended and consecrated, and the value of the pair represented his main capital, 20 with an income consisting, in these later years, of their respective rents which (thanks precisely to their original excellent type) had never been depressingly low. He could live in “Europe,” as he had been in the habit of living, on the product of these flourishing New York leases, and all the better since, that of the second structure, the mere number in its long row, having within a twelvemonth fallen in, renovation at a high advance had proved beautifully possible.

These were items of property indeed, but he had 30 found himself since his arrival distinguishing more than ever between them. The house within the street, two bristling blocks westward, was already in course of reconstruction as a tall mass of flats; he had acceded, some time before, to overtures for this conversion—in which, now that it was going forward, it had been not the least of his astonishments to find himself able, on the spot, and though without a previous ounce of such experience, to participate with a certain intelligence, almost with a certain authority. He 40 had lived his life with his back so turned to such concerns and his face addressed to those of so different an order that he scarce knew what to make of this lively stir, in a compartment of his mind never yet penetrated, of a capacity for business and a sense for construction. These virtues, so common all round him now, had been dormant in his own organism—where it might be said of them perhaps that they had slept the sleep of the just. At present, in the

splendid autumn weather—the autumn at least was a pure boon in the terrible place—he loafed about his “work” undeterred, secretly agitated, not in the least “minding” that the whole proposition, as they said, was vulgar and sordid, and ready to climb ladders, to walk the plank, to handle materials and look wise about them, to ask questions, in fine, and challenge explanations and really “go into” figures.

It amused, it verily quite charmed him, and, by the same stroke, it amused, and even more, Alice Staverton, though perhaps charming her perceptibly less. She wasn’t however going to be better off for it, as *he* was—and so astonishingly much nothing was now likely, he knew, ever to make her better off than she found herself, in the afternoon of life, as the delicately frugal possessor and tenant of the small house in Irving Place to which she had subtly managed to cling through her almost unbroken New York career. If he knew the way to it now better than to any other address among the dreadful multiplied numberings which seemed to him to reduce the whole place to some vast ledger-page, overgrown, fantastic, of ruled and criss-crossed lines and figures—if he had formed, for his consolation, that habit, it was really not a little because of the charm of his having encountered and recognised, in the vast wildness of the wholesale, breaking through the mere gross generalisation of wealth and force and success, a small still scene where items and shades, all delicate things, kept the sharpness of the notes of a high voice perfectly trained, and where economy hung about like the scent of a garden. His old friend lived with one maid and herself, dusted her relics and trimmed her lamps and polished her silver; she stood off, in the awful modern crush, when she could, but she sallied forth and did battle when the challenge was really to “spint,” the spint she after all confessed to, proudly and a little shyly, as to that of the better time, that of *their* common, their quite far-away and antediluvian social period and order. She made use of the street-cars when need be, the terrible things that people scrambled for as the panic-stricken at sea scramble for the boats, she affronted, inscrutably, under stress, all the public concussions and ordeals; and yet, with that slim mystifying grace of her appearance, which defied you to say if she were a fair young woman who looked older through trouble, or a fine smooth older one who looked young through successful indifference, with her precious reference,

above all, to memories and histories into which he could enter, she was as exquisite for him as some pale pressed flower (a rarity to begin with), and, failing other sweetnesses, she was a sufficient reward of his effort. They had communities of knowledge, "their" knowledge (this discriminating possessive was always on her lips) of presences of the other age, presences all overlaid, in his case, by the experience of a man and the freedom of a wanderer, overlaid by pleasure, by infidelity, by passages of life that were 10 strange and dim to her, just by "Europe" in short, but still unobscured, still exposed and cherished, under that pious visitation of the spirit from which she had never been diverted.

She had come with him one day to see how his "apartment-house" was rising; he had helped her over gaps and explained to her plans, and while they were there had happened to have, before her, a brief but lively discussion with the man in charge, the representative of the building-firm that had under- 20 taken his work. He had found himself quite "standing-up" to this personage over a failure on the latter's part to observe some detail of one of their noted conditions, and had so lucidly argued his case that, besides ever so prettily flushing, at the time, for sympathy in his triumph, she had afterwards said to him (though to a slightly greater effect of irony) that he had clearly for too many years neglected a real gift. If he had but stayed at home he would have anticipated the inventor of the sky-scraper. If he had but 30 stayed at home he would have discovered his genius in time really to start some new variety of awful architectural hare and run it till it burrowed in a gold-mine. He was to remember these words, while the weeks elapsed, for the small silver ring they had sounded over the queerest and deepest of his own lately most disguised and most muffled vibrations.

It had begun to be present to him after the first fortnight, it had broken out with the oddest abruptness, this particular wanton wonderment: it met him 40 there—and this was the image under which he himself judged the matter, or at least, not a little, thrilled and flushed with it—very much as he might have been met by some strange figure, some unexpected occupant, at a turn of one of the dim passages of an empty house. The quaint analogy quite hauntingly remained with him, when he didn't indeed rather improve it by a still intenser form: that of his opening a door behind which he would have made

sure of finding nothing, a door into a room shuttered and void, and yet so coming, with a great suppressed start, on some quite erect confronting presence, something planted in the middle of the place and facing him through the dusk. After that visit to the house in construction he walked with his companion to see the other and always so much the better one, which in the eastward direction formed one of the corners, the "jolly" one precisely, of the street now so generally dishonoured and disfigured in its westward reaches, and of the comparatively conservative Avenue. The Avenue still had pretensions, as Miss Staverton said, to decency; the old people had mostly gone, the old names were unknown, and here and there an old association seemed to stray, all vaguely, like some very aged person, out too late, whom you might meet and feel the impulse to watch or follow, in kindness, for safe restoration to shelter.

They went in together, our friends; he admitted himself with his key, as he kept no one there, he explained, preferring, for his reasons, to leave the place empty, under a simple arrangement with a good woman living in the neighbourhood and who came for a daily hour to open windows and dust and sweep. Spencer Brydon had his reasons and was growingly aware of them; they seemed to him better each time he was there, though he didn't name them all to his companion, any more than he told her as yet how often, how quite absurdly often, he himself came. He only let her see for the present, while they walked through the great blank rooms, that absolute vacancy reigned and that, from top to bottom, there was nothing but Mrs. Muldoon's broomstick, in a corner, to tempt the burglar. Mrs. Muldoon was then on the premises, and she loquaciously attended the visitors, preceding them from room to room and pushing back shutters and throwing up sashes—all to show them, as she remarked, how little there was to see. There was little indeed to see in the great gaunt shell where the main dispositions and the general apportionment of space, the style of an age of ampler allowances, had nevertheless for its master their honest pleading message, affecting him as some good old servant's, some lifelong retainer's appeal for a character, or even for a retiring-pension; yet it was also a remark of Mrs. Muldoon's that, glad as she was to oblige him by her noonday round, there was a request she greatly hoped he would never make of her. If he should wish her for any reason to come in

after dark she would just tell him, if he "plased," that he must ask it of somebody else

The fact that there was nothing to see didn't militate for the worthy woman against what one *might* see, and she put it frankly to Miss Staverton that no lady could be expected to like, could she? "scraping up to them top storeys in the ayvil hours" The gas and the electric light were off the house, and she fairly evoked a gruesome vision of her march through the great grey rooms—so many of them as there were too!—with her glimmering taper Miss Staverton met her honest glare with a smile and the profession that she herself certainly would recoil from such an adventure Spencer Brydon meanwhile held his peace—for the moment, the question of the "evil" hours in his old home had already become too grave for him He had begun some time since to "escape," and he knew just why a packet of candles addressed to that pursuit had been stowed by his own hand, three weeks before, at the back of the drawer of the fine old sideboard that occupied, as a "fixture," the deep recess in the dining-room Just now he laughed at his companions—quickly however changing the subject, for the reason that, in the first place, his laugh struck him even at that moment as starting the odd echo, the conscious human resonance (he scarce knew how to qualify it) that sounds made while he was there alone sent back to his ear on his fancy, and that, in the second, he imagined Alice Staverton for the instant on the point of asking him, with a divination, if he ever so prowled. There were divinations he was unprepared for, and he had at all events averted enquiry by the time Mrs Muldoon had left them, passing on to other parts

There was happily enough to say, on so consecrated a spot, that could be said freely and fairly, so that a whole train of declarations was precipitated by his friend's having himself broken out, after a yearning look round "But I hope you don't mean they want you to pull *this* to pieces!" His answer came, promptly, with his re-awakened wrath it was of course exactly what they wanted, and what they were "at" him for, daily, with the iteration of people who couldn't for their life understand a man's liability to decent feelings. He had found the place, just as it stood and beyond what he could express, an interest and a joy There were values other than the beastly rent-values, and in short, in short—! But it was thus Miss Staverton took him up "In short

you're to make so good a thing of your sky-scrapecr that, living in luxury on *those* ill-gotten gains, you can afford for a while to be sentimental here!" Her smile had for him, with the words, the particular mild irony with which he found half her talk suffused, an irony without bitterness and that came, exactly, from her having so much imagination—not, like the cheap sarcasms with which one heard most people, about the world of "society," bid for the reputation of cleverness, from nobody's really having any It was agreeable to him at this very moment to be sure that when he had answered, after a brief demur, "Well yes so, precisely, you may put it!" her imagination would still do him justice He explained that even if never a dollar were to come to him from the other house he would nevertheless cherish this one, and he dwelt, further, while they lingered and wandered, on the fact of the stupefaction he was already exciting, the positive mystification he felt himself create

He spoke of the value of all he read into it, into the mere sight of the walls, mere shapes of the rooms, mere sound of the floors, mere feel, in his hand, of the old silver-plated knobs of the several mahogany doors, which suggested the pressure of the palms of the dead, the seventy years of the past in fine that these things represented, the annals of nearly three generations, counting his grandfather's, the one that had ended there, and the impalpable ashes of his long-extinct youth, afloat in the very air like microscopic motes She listened to everything, she was a woman who answered intimately but who utterly didn't chatter She scattered abroad therefore no cloud of words, she could assent, she could agree, above all she could encourage, without doing that Only at the last she went a little further than he had done himself. "And then how do you know? You may still, after all, want to live here" It rather indeed pulled him up, for it wasn't what he had been thinking, at least in her sense of the words. "You mean I may decide to stay on for the sake of it?"

"Well, *with* such a home—!" But, quite beautifully, she had too much tact to dot so monstrous an *i*, and it was precisely an illustration of the way she didn't rattle How could any one—of any wit—insist on any one else's "wanting" to live in New York?

"Oh," he said, "I *might* have lived here (since I had my opportunity early in life), I might have put in here all these years. Then everything would have

been different enough—and, I dare say, 'funny' enough. But that's another matter. And then the beauty of it—I mean of my perversity, of my refusal to agree to a 'deal'—is just in the total absence of a reason. Don't you see that if I had a reason about the matter at all it would *have* to be the other way, and would then be inevitably a reason of dollars? There are no reasons here *but* of dollars. Let us therefore have none whatever—not the ghost of one."

They were back in the hall then for departure,¹⁰ but from where they stood the vista was large, through an open door, into the great square main saloon, with its almost antique felicity of brave spaces between windows. Her eyes came back from that reach and met his own a moment. "Are you very sure the 'ghost' of one doesn't, much rather, serve—?"

He had a positive sense of turning pale. But it was as near as they were then to come. For he made answer, he believed, between a glare and a grin: "Oh ghosts—of course the place must swarm with them!²⁰ I should be ashamed of it if it didn't. Poor Mrs. Muldoon's right, and it's why I haven't asked her to do more than look in."

Miss Staverton's gaze again lost itself, and things she didn't utter, it was clear, came and went in her mind. She might even for the minute, off there in the fine room, have imagined some element dimly gathering. Simplified like the death-mask of a handsome face, it perhaps produced for her just then an effect akin to the stir of an expression in the "set" com-³⁰ memorative plaster. Yet whatever her impression may have been she produced instead a vague platitude. "Well, if it were only furnished and lived in—!"

She appeared to imply that in case of its being still furnished he might have been a little less opposed to the idea of a return. But she passed straight into the vestibule, as if to leave her words behind her, and the next moment he had opened the house-door and was standing with her on the steps. He closed the door and, while he re-pocketed his key,⁴⁰ looking up and down, they took in the comparatively harsh actuality of the Avenue, which reminded him of the assault of the outer light of the Desert on the traveller emerging from an Egyptian tomb. But he risked before they stepped into the street his gathered answer to her speech. "For me it *is* lived in. For me it *is* furnished." At which it was easy for her to sigh "Ah yes—!" all vaguely and discreetly; since his parents and his favourite sister, to say nothing of

other kin, in numbers, had run their course and met their end there. That represented, within the walls, ineffaceable life.

It was a few days after this that, during an hour passed with her again, he had expressed his impatience of the too flattering curiosity—among the people he met—about his appreciation of New York. He had arrived at none at all that was socially producible, and as for that matter of his "thinking" (thinking the better or the worse of anything there) he was wholly taken up with one subject of thought. It was mere vain egoism, and it was moreover, if she liked, a morbid obsession. He found all things come back to the question of what he personally might have been, how he might have led his life and "turned out," if he had not so, at the outset, given it up. And confessing for the first time to the intensity within him of this absurd speculation—which but proved also, no doubt, the habit of too selfishly thinking—he affirmed the impotence there of any other source of interest, any other native appeal. "What would it have made of me, what would it have made of me? I keep for ever wondering, all idiotically; as if I could possibly know! I see what it has made of dozens of others, those I meet, and it positively aches within me, to the point of exasperation, that it would have made something of me as well. Only I can't make out *what*, and the worry of it, the small rage of curiosity never to be satisfied, brings back what I remember to have felt, once or twice, after judging best, for reasons, to burn some important letter unopened. I've been sorry, I've hated it—I've never known what was in the letter. You may of course say it's a trifle—!"

"I don't say it's a trifle," Miss Staverton gravely interrupted.

She was seated by her fire, and before her, on his feet and restless, he turned to and fro between this intensity of his idea and a fitful and unseeing inspection, through his single eyeglass, of the dear little old objects on her chimney-piece. Her interruption made him for an instant look at her harder. "I shouldn't care if you did!" he laughed, however; "and it's only a figure, at any rate, for the way I now feel. *Not* to have followed my perverse young course—and almost in the teeth of my father's curse, as I may say; not to have kept it up, so, 'over there,' from that day to this, without a doubt or a pang; not, above all, to have liked it, to have loved it, so much,

loved it, no doubt, with such an abysmal conceit of my own preference some variation from *that*, I say, must have produced some different effect for my life and for my 'foim' I should have stuck here—if it had been possible, and I was too young, at twenty-three, to judge, *pour deux sous*,⁴⁰ whether it were possible. If I had waited I might have seen it was, and then I might have been, by staying here, something nearer to one of these types who have been hammered so hard and made so keen by their conditions. It isn't that I admire them so much—the question of any charm in them, or of any charm, beyond that of the rank money-passion, exerted by their conditions *for* them, has nothing to do with the matter—it's only a question of what fantastic, yet perfectly possible, development of my own nature I mayn't have missed. It comes over me that I had then a strange *alter ego* deep down somewhere within me, as the full-blown flower is in the small tight bud, and that I just took the course, I just transferred him to the climate, that blighted him for once and for ever."

"And you wonder about the flower," Miss Staver-ton said. "So do I, if you want to know, and so I've been wondering these several weeks. I believe in the flower," she continued, "I feel it would have been quite splendid, quite huge and monstrous."

"Monstrous above all!" her visitor echoed, "and I imagine, by the same stroke, quite hideous and offensive."

"You don't believe that," she returned, "if you did you wouldn't wonder. You'd know, and that would be enough for you. What you feel—and what I feel *for* you—is that you'd have had power."

"You'd have liked me that way?" he asked.

She barely hung fire. "How should I not have liked you?"

"I see. You'd have liked me, have preferred me, a billionaire!"

"How should I not have liked you?" she simply asked again.

He stood before her still—her question kept him motionless. He took it in, so much there was of it, and indeed his not otherwise meeting it testified to that. "I know at least what I am," he simply went on; "the other side of the medal's clear enough. I've not been edifying—I believe I'm thought in a hundred quarters to have been barely decent. I've

followed strange paths and worshipped strange gods, it must have come to you again and again—in fact you've admitted to me as much—that I was leading, at any time these thirty years, a selfish frivolous scandalous life. And you see what it has made of me."

She just waited, smiling at him. "You see what it has made of *me*."

"Oh you're a person whom nothing can have altered. You were born to be what you are, anywhere, anyway. You've the perfection nothing else could have blighted. And don't you see how, without my exile, I shouldn't have been waiting till now—?" But he pulled up for the strange pang.

"The great thing to see," she presently said, "seems to me to be that it has spoiled nothing. It hasn't spoiled your being here at last. It hasn't spoiled this. It hasn't spoiled your speaking—" She also however faltered.

He wondered at everything her controlled emotion might mean. "Do you believe then—too dreadfully!—that I *am* as good as I might ever have been?"

"Oh no! Far from it!" With which she got up from her chair and was nearer to him. "But I don't care," she smiled.

"You mean I'm good enough?"

She considered a little. "Will you believe it if I say so? I mean will you let that settle your question for you?" And then as if making out in his face that he drew back from this, that he had some idea which, however absurd, he couldn't yet bargain away. "Oh you don't care either—but very differently. You don't care for anything but yourself."

Spencer Brydon recognised it—it was in fact what he had absolutely professed. Yet he importantly qualified. "*He* isn't myself. He's the just so totally other person. But I do want to see him," he added. "And I can. And I shall."

Their eyes met for a minute while he guessed from something in hers that she divined his strange sense. But neither of them otherwise expressed it, and her apparent understanding, with no protesting shock, no easy denison, touched him more deeply than anything yet, constituting for his stifled perversity, on the spot, an element that was like breathable air. What she said however was unexpected. "Well, I've seen him."

"You—?"

"I've seen him in a dream."

"Oh a 'dream'—!" It let him down.

⁴⁰ "For two cents."

"But twice over," she continued. "I saw him as I see you now."

"You've dreamed the same dream—?"

"Twice over," she repeated. "The very same."

This did somehow a little speak to him, as it also gratified him. "You dream about me at that rate?"

"Ah about *him!*" she smiled.

His eyes again sounded her. "Then you know all about him." And as she said nothing more: "What's the wretch like?"

She hesitated, and it was as if he were pressing her so hard that, resisting for reasons of her own, she had to turn away. "I'll tell you some other time!"

II

It was after this that there was most of a virtue for him, most of a cultivated charm, most of a preposterous secret thrill, in the particular form of surrender to his obsession and of address to what he more and more believed to be his privilege. It was ²⁰ what in these weeks he was living for—since he really felt life to begin but after Mrs. Muldoon had retired from the scene and, visiting the ample house from attic to cellar, making sure he was alone, he knew himself in safe possession and, as he tacitly expressed it, let himself go. He sometimes came twice in the twenty-four hours; the moments he liked best were those of gathering dusk, of the short autumn twilight; this was the time of which, again and again, he found himself hoping most. Then he could, as seemed ³⁰ to him, most intimately wander and wait, linger and listen, feel his fine attention, never in his life before so fine, on the pulse of the great vague place: he preferred the lampless hour and only wished he might have prolonged each day the deep crepuscular spell. Later—rarely much before midnight, but then for a considerable vigil—he watched with his glimmering light; moving slowly, holding it high, playing it far, rejoicing above all, as much as he might, in open vistas, reaches of communication between rooms and ⁴⁰ by passages; the long straight chance or show, as he would have called it, for the revelation he pretended to invite. It was a practice he found he could perfectly "work" without exciting remark; no one was in the least the wiser for it; even Alice Staverton, who was moreover a well of discretion, didn't quite fully imagine.

He let himself in and let himself out with the assurance of calm proprietorship; and accident so far

favoured him that, if a fat Avenue "officer" had happened on occasion to see him entering at eleven-thirty, he had never yet, to the best of his belief, been noticed as emerging at two. He walked there on the crisp November nights, arrived regularly at the evening's end; it was as easy to do this after dining out as to take his way to a club or to his hotel. When he left his club, if he hadn't been dining out, it was ostensibly to go to his hotel; and when he left his ¹⁰ hotel, if he had spent a part of the evening there, it was ostensibly to go to his club. Everything was easy in fine; everything conspired and promoted: there was truly even in the strain of his experience something that glossed over, something that salved and simplified, all the rest of consciousness. He circulated, talked, renewed, loosely and pleasantly, old relations—met indeed, so far as he could, new expectations and seemed to make out on the whole that in spite of the career, of such different contacts, which he had spoken of to Miss Staverton as ministering so little, for those who might have watched it, to edification, he was positively rather liked than not. He was a dim secondary social success—and all with people who had truly not an idea of him. It was all mere surface sound, this murmur of their welcome, this popping of their corks—just as his gestures of response were the extravagant shadows, emphatic in proportion as they meant little, of some game of *ombres chinoises*.⁴¹ He projected himself all day, in thought, straight over the bristling line of hard unconscious heads and into the other, the real, the waiting life; the life that, as soon as he had heard behind him the click of his great house-door, began for him, on the jolly corner, as beguilingly as the slow opening bars of some rich music follows the tap of the conductor's wand.

He always caught the first effect of the steel point of his stick on the old marble of the hall pavement, large black-and-white squares that he remembered as the admiration of his childhood and that had then made in him, as he now saw, for the growth of an early conception of style. This effect was the dim reverberating tinkle as of some far-off bell hung who should say where?—in the depths of the house, of the past, of that mystical other world that might have flourished for him had he not, for weal or woe, abandoned it. On this impression he did ever the same thing; he put his stick noiselessly away in a corner—

⁴¹ Spanish card game—literally "Chinese shadows."

feeling the place once more in the likeness of some great glass bowl, all precious concave crystal, set delicately humming by the play of a moist finger round its edge. The concave crystal held, as it were, this mystical other world, and the indescribably fine murmur of its rim was the sigh there, the scarce audible pathetic wail to his strained ear, of all the old baffled forsworn possibilities. What he did therefore by this appeal of his hushed presence was to wake them into such measure of ghostly life as they might still enjoy. They were shy, all but unappeasably shy, but they weren't really sinister, at least they weren't as he had hitherto felt them—before they had taken the Form he so yearned to make them take, the Form he at moments saw himself in the light of faintly hunting on tiptoe, the points of his evening-shoes, from room to room and from storey to storey.

That was the essence of his vision—which was all rank folly, if one would, while he was out of the house and otherwise occupied, but which took on the last verisimilitude as soon as he was placed and posted. He knew what he meant and what he wanted, it was as clear as the figure on a cheque presented in demand for cash. His *alter ego* “walked”—that was the note of his image of him, while his image of his motive for his own odd pastime was the desire to waylay him and meet him. He roamed, slowly, warily, but all restlessly, he himself did—Mrs. Muldoon had been right, absolutely, with her figure of their “cragging”; and the presence he watched for would roam restlessly too. But it would be as cautious and as shifty, the conviction of its probable, in fact its already quite sensible, quite audible evasion of pursuit grew for him from night to night, laying on him finally a rigour to which nothing in his life had been comparable. It had been the theory of many superficially-judging persons, he knew, that he was wasting that life in a surrender to sensations, but he had tasted of no pleasure so fine as his actual tension, had been introduced to no sport that demanded at once the patience and the nerve of this stalking of a creature more subtle, yet at bay perhaps more formidable, than any beast of the forest. The terms, the comparisons, the very practices of the chase positively came again into play, there were even moments when passages of his occasional experience as a sportsman, stirred memories, from his younger time, of moor and mountain and desert, revived for him—and to the increase of his keenness—by the tremen-

dous force of analogy. He found himself at moments—once he had placed his single light on some mantel-shelf or in some recess—stepping back into shelter or shade, effacing himself behind a door or in an embrasure, as he had sought of old the vantage of rock and tree, he found himself holding his breath and living in the joy of the instant, the supreme suspense created by big game alone.

He wasn't afraid (though putting himself the question as he believed gentlemen on Bengal tiger-shoots or in close quarters with the great bear of the Rockies had been known to confess to having put it); and this indeed—since here at least he might be frank!—because of the impression, so intimate and so strange, that he himself produced as yet a dread, produced certainly a strain, beyond the liveliest he was likely to feel. They fell for him into categories, they fairly became familiar, the signs, for his own perception, of the alarm his presence and his vigilance created, though leaving him always to remark, portentously, on his probably having formed a relation, his probably enjoying a consciousness, unique in the experience of man. People enough, first and last, had been in terror of apparitions, but who had ever before so turned the tables and become himself, in the apparitional world, an incalculable terror? He might have found this sublime had he quite dared to think of it, but he didn't too much insist, truly, on that side of his privilege. With habit and repetition he gained to an extraordinary degree the power to penetrate the dusk of distances and the darkness of corners, to resolve back into their innocence the treacheries of uncertain light, the evil-looking forms taken in the gloom by mere shadows, by accidents of the air, by shifting effects of perspective; putting down his dim luminary he could still wander on without it, pass into other rooms and, only knowing it was there behind him in case of need, see his way about, visually project for his purpose a comparative clearness. It made him feel, this acquired faculty, like some monstrous stealthy cat, he wondered if he would have glared at these moments with large shining yellow eyes, and what it mightn't verily be, for the poor hard-pressed *alter ego*, to be confronted with such a type.

He liked however the open shutters; he opened everywhere those Mrs. Muldoon had closed, closing them as carefully afterwards, so that she shouldn't notice: he liked—oh this he did like, and above all

in the upper rooms!—the sense of the hard silver of the autumn stars through the window-panes, and scarcely less the flare of the street-lamps below, the white electric lustre which it would have taken curtains to keep out. This was human actual social; this was of the world he had lived in, and he was more at his ease certainly for the countenance, coldly general and impersonal, that all the while and in spite of his detachment it seemed to give him. He had support of course mostly in the rooms at the wide front and the prolonged side; it failed him considerably in the central shades and the parts at the back. But if he sometimes, on his rounds, was glad of his optical reach, so none the less often the rear of the house affected him as the very jungle of his prey. The place was there more subdivided; a large “extension” in particular, where small rooms for servants had been multiplied, abounded in nooks and corners, in closets and passages, in the ramifications especially of an ample back staircase over which he leaned, many a time, to look far down—not deterred from his gravity even while aware that he might, for a spectator, have figured some solemn simpleton playing at hide-and-seek. Outside in fact he might himself make that ironic *rapprochement*,⁴² but within the walls, and in spite of the clear windows, his consistency was proof against the cynical light of New York.

It had belonged to that idea of the exasperated consciousness of his victim to become a real test for him; since he had quite put it to himself from the first that, oh distinctly! he could “cultivate” his whole perception. He had felt it as above all open to cultivation—which indeed was but another name for his manner of spending his time. He was bringing it on, bringing it to perfection, by practice; in consequence of which it had grown so fine that he was now aware of impressions, attestations of his general postulate, that couldn’t have broken upon him at once. This was the case more specifically with a phenomenon at last quite frequent for him in the upper rooms, the recognition—absolutely unmis-
takeable, and by a turn dating from a particular hour, his resumption of his campaign after a diplomatic drop, a calculated absence of three nights—of his being definitely followed, tracked at a distance carefully taken and to the express end that he should the less confidently, less arrogantly, appear to himself merely to pursue. It worried, it finally quite broke him up,

⁴² Comparison.

for it proved, of all the conceivable impressions, the one least suited to his book. He was kept in sight while remaining himself—as regards the essence of his position—sightless, and his only recourse then was in abrupt turns, rapid recoveries of ground. He wheeled about, retracing his steps, as if he might so catch in his face at least the stirred air of some other quick revolution. It was indeed true that his fully dislocalised thought of these manœuvres recalled to him Pantaloon, at the Christmas farce, buffeted and tricked from behind by ubiquitous Harlequin; but it left intact the influence of the conditions themselves each time he was re-exposed to them, so that in fact this association, had he suffered it to become constant, would on a certain side have but ministered to his intenser gravity. He had made, as I have said, to create on the premises the baseless sense of a reprieve, his three absences; and the result of the third was to confirm the after-effect of the second.

On his return, that night—the night succeeding his last intermission—he stood in the hall and looked up the staircase with a certainty more intimate than any he had yet known. “He’s *there*, at the top, and waiting—not, as in general, falling back for disappearance. He’s holding his ground, and it’s the first time—which is a proof, isn’t it? that something has happened for him.” So Brydon argued with his hand on the banister and his foot on the lowest stair; in which position he felt as never before the air chilled by his logic. He himself turned cold in it, for he seemed of a sudden to know what now was involved. “Harder pressed?—yes, he takes it in, with its thus making clear to him that I’ve come, as they say, ‘to stay.’ He finally doesn’t like and can’t bear it, in the sense, I mean, that his wrath, his menaced interest, now balances with his dread. I’ve hunted him till he has ‘turned’: that, up there, is what has happened—he’s the fanged or the antlered animal brought at last to bay.” There came to him, as I say—but determined by an influence beyond my notation!—the acuteness of this certainty; under which however the next moment he had broken into a sweat that he would as little have consented to attribute to fear as he would have dared immediately to act upon it for enterprise. It marked none the less a prodigious thrill, a thrill that represented sudden dismay, no doubt, but also represented, and with the selfsame throb, the strangest, the most joyous, possibly the

next minute almost the proudest, duplication of consciousness

"He has been dodging, retreating, hiding, but now, worked up to anger, he'll fight!"—this intense impression made a single mouthful, as it were, of terror and applause. But what was wondrous was that the applause, for the felt fact, was so eager, since, if it was his other self he was running to earth, this ineffable identity was thus in the last resort not unworthy of him. It bristled there—somewhere near at hand, however unseen still—as the hunted thing, even as the trodden worm of the adage *must* at last bristle, and Brydon at this instant tasted probably of a sensation more complex than had ever before found itself consistent with sanity. It was as if it would have shamed him that a character so associated with his own should triumphantly succeed in just skulking, should to the end not risk the open, so that the drop of this danger was, on the spot, a great lift of the whole situation. Yet with another rare shift of the same subtlety he was already trying to measure by how much more he himself might now be in peril of fear, so rejoicing that he could, in another form, actively inspire that fear, and simultaneously quaking for the form in which he might passively know it.

The apprehension of knowing it must after a little have grown in him, and the strangest moment of his adventure perhaps, the most memorable or really most interesting, afterwards, of his crisis, was the lapse of certain instants of concentrated consciousness *combat*, the sense of a need to hold on to something, even after the manner of a man slipping and slipping on some awful incline, the vivid impulse, above all, to move, to act, to charge, somehow and upon something—to show himself, in a word, that he wasn't afraid. The state of "holding-on" was thus the state to which he was momentarily reduced, if there had been anything, in the great vacancy, to seize, he would presently have been aware of having clutched it as he might under a shock at home have clutched the nearest chair-back. He had been surprised at any rate—of this he *was* aware—into something unprecedented since his original appropriation of the place; he had closed his eyes, held them tight, for a long minute, as with that instinct of dismay and that terror of vision. When he opened them the room, the other contiguous rooms, extraordinarily, seemed lighter—so light, almost, that at first, he took the change for day. He stood firm, however that might

be, just where he had paused, his resistance had helped him—it was as if there were something he had tided over. He knew after a little what this was—it had been in the imminent danger of flight. He had stiffened his will against going, without this he would have made for the stairs, and it seemed to him that, still with his eyes closed, he would have descended them, would have known how, straight and swiftly, to the bottom.

Well, as he had held out, here he was—still at the top, among the more intricate upper rooms and with the gauntlet of the others, of all the rest of the house, still to run when it should be his time to go. He would go at his time—only at his time—didn't he go every night very much at the same hour? He took out his watch—there was light for that—it was scarcely a quarter past one, and he had never withdrawn so soon. He reached his lodgings for the most part at two—with his walk of a quarter of an hour. He would wait for the last quarter—he wouldn't stir till then, and he kept his watch there with his eyes on it, reflecting while he held it that this deliberate wait, a wait with an effort, which he recognised, would serve perfectly for the attestation he desired to make. It would prove his courage—unless indeed the latter might most be proved by his budging at last from his place. What he mainly felt now was that, since he hadn't originally scuttled, he had his dignities—which had never in his life seemed so many—all to preserve and to carry aloft. This was before him in truth as a physical image, an image almost worthy of an age of greater romance. That remark indeed glimmered for him only to glow the next instant with a finer light, since what age of romance, after all, could have matched either the state of his mind or, "objectively," as they said, the wonder of his situation? The only difference would have been that, brandishing his dignities over his head as in a parchment scroll, he might then—that is in the heroic time—have proceeded downstairs with a drawn sword in his other grasp.

At present, really, the light he had set down on the mantel of the next room would have to figure his sword, which utensil, in the course of a minute, he had taken the requisite number of steps to possess himself of. The door between the rooms was open, and from the second another door opened to a third. These rooms, as he remembered, gave all three upon a common corridor as well, but there was a fourth,

beyond them, without issue save through the preceding. To have moved, to have heard his step again, was appreciably a help; though even in recognising this he lingered once more a little by the chimney-piece on which his light had rested. When he next moved, just hesitating where to turn, he found himself considering a circumstance that, after his first and comparatively vague apprehension of it, produced in him the start that often attends some pang of recollection, the violent shock of having ceased happily to forget. He had come into sight of the door in which the brief chain of communication ended and which he now surveyed from the nearer threshold, the one not directly facing it. Placed at some distance to the left of this point, it would have admitted him to the last room of the four, the room without other approach or egress, had it not, to his intimate conviction, been closed *since* his former visitation, the matter probably of a quarter of an hour before. He stared with all his eyes at the wonder of the fact, arrested again where he stood and again holding his breath while he sounded its sense. Surely it had been *subsequently* closed—that is it had been on his previous passage indubitably open!

He took it full in the face that something had happened between—that he couldn't not have noticed before (by which he meant on his original tour of all the rooms that evening) that such a barrier had exceptionally presented itself. He had indeed since that moment undergone an agitation so extraordinary that it might have muddled for him any earlier view; and he tried to convince himself that he might perhaps then have gone into the room and, inadvertently, automatically, on coming out, have drawn the door after him. The difficulty was that this exactly was what he never did; it was against his whole policy, as he might have said, the essence of which was to keep vistas clear. He had them from the first, as he was well aware, quite on the brain: the strange apparition, at the far end of one of them, of his baffled "prey" (which had become by so sharp an irony so little the term now to apply!) was the form of success his imagination had most cherished, projecting into it always a refinement of beauty. He had known fifty times the start of perception that had afterwards dropped; had fifty times gasped to himself "There" under some fond brief hallucination. The house, as the case stood, admirably lent itself; he might wonder at the taste,

the native architecture of the particular time, which could rejoice so in the multiplication of doors—the opposite extreme to the modern, the actual almost complete proscription of them; but it had fairly contributed to provoke this obsession of the presence encountered telescopically, as he might say, focussed and studied in diminishing perspective and as by a rest for the elbow.

It was with these considerations that his present attention was charged—they perfectly availed to make what he saw portentous. He *couldn't*, by any lapse, have blocked that aperture; and if he hadn't, if it was unthinkable, why what else was clear but that there had been another agent? Another agent?—he had been catching, as he felt, a moment back, the very breath of him; but when had he been so close as in this simple, this logical, this completely personal act? It was so logical, that is, that one might have *taken* it for personal; yet for what did Brydon take it, he asked himself, while, softly panting, he felt his eyes almost leave their sockets. Ah this time at last they *were*, the two, the opposed projections of him, in presence; and this time, as much as one would, the question of danger loomed. With it rose, as not before, the question of courage—for what he knew the blank face of the door to say to him was "Show us how much you have!" It stared, it glared back at him with that challenge; it put to him the two alternatives: should he just push it open or not? Oh to have this consciousness was to *think*—and to think, Brydon knew, as he stood there, was, with the lapsing moments, not to have acted! Not to have acted—that was the misery and the pang—was even still not to act; was in fact *all* to feel the thing in another, in a new and terrible way. How long did he pause and how long did he debate? There was presently nothing to measure it; for his vibration had already changed—as just by the effect of its intensity. Shut up there, at bay, defiant, and with the prodigy of the thing palpably proveably *done*, thus giving notice like some stark signboard—under that accession of accent the situation itself had turned; and Brydon at last remarkably made up his mind on what it had turned to.

It had turned altogether to a different admonition; to a supreme hint, for him, of the value of Discretion! This slowly dawned, no doubt—for it could take its time; so perfectly, on his threshold, had he been stayed, so little as yet had he either advanced or

retreated. It was the strangest of all things that now when, by his taking ten steps and applying his hand to a latch, or even his shoulder and his knee, if necessary, to a panel, all the hunger of his prime need might have been met, his high curiosity crowned, his unrest assuaged—it was amazing, but it was also exquisite and rare, that insistence should have, at a touch, quite dropped from him. Discretion—he jumped at that, and yet not, verily, at such a pitch, because it saved his nerves or his skin, but because, much more valuably, it saved the situation. When I say he “jumped” at it I feel the consonance of this term with the fact that—at the end indeed of I know not how long—he did move again, he crossed straight to the door. He wouldn’t touch it—it seemed now that he might if he would—he would only just wait there a little, to show, to prove, that he wouldn’t. He had thus another station, close to the thin partition by which revelation was denied him, but with his eyes bent and his hands held off in a mere intensity of stillness. He listened as if there had been something to hear, but this attitude, while it lasted, was his own communication. “If you won’t then—good. I spare you and I give up. You affect me as by the appeal positively for pity you convince me that for reasons rigid and sublime—what do I know?—we both of us should have suffered. I respect them then, and, though moved and privileged as, I believe, it has never been given to man, I retire, I renounce—never, on my honour, to try again. So rest for ever—and let me!”

That, for Brydon was the deep sense of this last demonstration—solemn, measured, directed, as he felt it to be. He brought it to a close, he turned away; and now verily he knew how deeply he had been stirred. He retraced his steps, taking up his candle, burnt, he observed, well-nigh to the socket, and marking again, lighten it as he would, the distinctness of his footfall; after which, in a moment, he knew himself at the other side of the house. He did here what he had not yet done at these hours—he opened half a casement, one of those in the front, and let in the air of the night; a thing he would have taken at any time previous for a sharp rupture of his spell. His spell was broken now, and it didn’t matter—broken by his concession and his surrender, which made it idle henceforth that he should ever come back. The empty street—its other life so marked even by the great lamplit vacancy—was within call,

within touch, he stayed there as to be in it again, high above it though he was still perched, he watched as for some comforting common fact, some vulgar human note, the passage of a scavenger or a thief, some night-bird however base. He would have blessed that sign of life, he would have welcomed positively the slow approach of his friend the policeman, whom he had hitherto only sought to avoid, and was not sure that if the patrol had come into sight he mightn’t have felt the impulse to get into relation with it, to hail it, on some pretext, from his fourth floor.

The pretext that wouldn’t have been too silly or too compromising, the explanation that would have saved his dignity and kept his name, in such a case, out of the papers, was not definite to him—he was so occupied with the thought of recording his Discretion—as an effect of the vow he had just uttered to his intimate adversary—that the importance of this loomed large and something had overtaken all ironically his sense of proportion. If there had been a ladder applied to the front of the house, even one of the vertiginous perpendiculars employed by painters and roofers and sometimes left standing overnight, he would have managed somehow, astride of the window-sill, to compass by outstretched leg and arm that mode of descent. If there had been some such uncanny thing as he had found in his room at hotels, a workable fire-escape in the form of notched cable or a canvas shoot, he would have availed himself of it as a proof—well, of his present delicacy. He nursed that sentiment, as the question stood, a little in vain, and even—at the end of he scarce knew, once more, how long—found it, as by the action on his mind of the failure of response of the outer world, sinking back to vague anguish. It seemed to him he had waited an age for some stir of the great gum hush, the life of the town was itself under a spell—so unnaturally, up and down the whole prospect of known and rather ugly objects, the blankness and the silence lasted. Had they ever, he asked himself, the hard-faced houses, which had begun to look livid in the dim dawn, had they ever spoken so little to any need of his spirit? Great builded voids, great crowded stillnesses put on, often, in the heart of cities, for the small hours, a sort of sinister mask, and it was of this large collective negation that Brydon presently became conscious—all the more that the break of day was, almost in-

credibly, now at hand, proving to him what a night he had made of it.

He looked again at his watch, saw what had become of his time-values (he had taken hours for minutes—not, as in other tense situations, minutes for hours) and the strange air of the streets was but the weak, the sullen flush of a dawn in which everything was still locked up. His choked appeal from his own open window had been the sole note of life, and he could but break off at last as for a worse 10 despair. Yet while so deeply demoralised he was capable again of an impulse denoting—at least by his present measure—extraordinary resolution; of retracing his steps to the spot where he had turned cold with the extinction of his last pulse of doubt as to there being in the place another presence than his own. This required an effort strong enough to sicken him; but he had his reason, which overmastered for the moment everything else. There was the whole of the rest of the house to traverse, and how should he 20 screw himself to that if the door he had seen closed were at present open? He could hold to the idea that the closing had practically been for him an act of mercy, a chance offered him to descend, depart, get off the ground and never again profane it. This conception held together, it worked; but what it meant for him depended now clearly on the amount of forbearance his recent action, or rather his recent inaction, had engendered. The image of the “presence,” whatever it was, waiting there for him to go—this 30 image had not yet been so concrete for his nerves as when he stopped short of the point at which certainty would have come to him. For, with all his resolution, or more exactly with all his dread, he did stop short—he hung back from really seeing. The risk was too great and his fear too definite: it took at this moment an awful specific form.

He knew—yes, as he had never known anything—that, *should* he see the door open, it would all too abjectly be the end of him. It would mean that the 40 agent of his shame—for his shame was the deep abjection—was once more at large and in general possession; and what glared him thus in the face was the act that this would determine for him. It would send him straight about to the window he had left open, and by that window, be long ladder and dangling rope as absent as they would, he saw himself uncontrollably insanely fatally take his way to the street. The hideous chance of this he at least could

avert; but he could only avert it by recoiling in time from assurance. He had the whole house to deal with, this fact was still there; only he now knew that uncertainty alone could start him. He stole back from where he had checked himself—merely to do so was suddenly like safety—and, making blindly for the greater staircase, left gaping rooms and sounding passages behind. Here was the top of the stairs, with a fine large dim descent and three spacious landings to mark off. His instinct was all for mildness, but his feet were harsh on the floors, and, strangely, when he had in a couple of minutes become aware of this, it counted somehow for help. He couldn't have spoken, the tone of his voice would have scared him, and the common conceit or resource of “whistling in the dark” (whether literally or figuratively) have appeared basely vulgar; yet he liked none the less to hear himself go, and when he had reached his first landing—taking it all with no rush, but quite steadily—that stage of success drew from him a gasp of relief.

The house, withal, seemed immense, the scale of space again inordinate; the open rooms, to no one of which his eyes deflected, gloomed in their shuttered state like mouths of caverns; only the high skylight that formed the crown of the deep well created for him a medium in which he could advance, but which might have been, for queerness of colour, some watery under-world. He tried to think of something noble, as that his property was really grand, a splendid possession; but this nobleness took the form too of the clear delight with which he was finally to sacrifice it. They might come in now, the builders, the destroyers—they might come as soon as they would. At the end of two flights he had dropped to another zone, and from the middle of the third, with only one more left, he recognised the influence of the lower windows, of half-drawn blinds, of the occasional gleam of street-lamps, of the glazed spaces of the vestibule. This was the bottom of the sea, which showed an illumination of its own and which he even saw paved—when at a given moment he drew up to sink a long look over the banisters—with the marble squares of his childhood. By that time indubitably he felt, as he might have said in a commoner cause, better; it had allowed him to stop and draw breath, and the ease increased with the sight of the old black-and-white slabs. But what he most felt was that now surely, with the element of

impunity pulling him as by hard firm hands, the case was settled for what he might have seen above had he dared that last look. The closed door, blessedly remote now, was still closed—and he had only in short to reach that of the house.

He came down further, he crossed the passage forming the access to the last flight, and if here again he stopped an instant it was almost for the sharpness of the thrill of assured escape. It made him shut his eyes—which opened again to the straight slope of the remainder of the stairs. Here was impunity still, but impunity almost excessive, inasmuch as the side-lights and the high fan-tracery of the entrance were glimmering straight into the hall, an appearance produced, he the next instant saw, by the fact that the vestibule gaped wide, that the hinged halves of the inner door had been throw far back. Out of that again the *question* sprang at him, making his eyes, as he felt, half-start from his head, as they had done, at the top of the house, before the sign of the other 20 door. If he had left that one open, hadn't he left this one closed, and wasn't he now in *most* immediate presence of some inconceivable occult activity? It was as sharp, the question, as a knife in his side, but the answer hung fire still and seemed to lose itself in the vague darkness to which the thin admitted dawn, glimmering archwise over the whole outer door, made a semicircular margin, a cold silvery nimbus that seemed to play a little as he looked—to shift and expand and contract.

It was as if there had been something within it, protected by indistinctness and corresponding in extent with the opaque surface behind, the painted panels of the last barrier to his escape, of which the key was in his pocket. The indistinctness mocked him even while he stared, affected him as somehow shrouding or challenging certitude, so that after faltering an instant on his step he let himself go with the sense that here *was* at last something to meet, to touch, to take, to know—something all unnatural 40 and dreadful, but to advance upon which was the condition for him either of liberation or of supreme defeat. The penumbra, dense and dark, was the virtual screen of a figure which stood in it as still as some image erect in a niche or as some black-vizored sentinel guarding a treasure. Brydon was to know afterwards, was to recall and make out, the particular thing he had believed during the rest of his descent. He saw, in its great grey glimmering margin,

the central vagueness diminish, and he felt it to be taking the very form toward which, for so many days, the passion of his curiosity had yearned. It gloomed, it loomed, it was something, it was somebody, the prodigy of a personal presence.

Rigid and conscious, spectral yet human, a man of his own substance and stature waited there to measure himself with his power to dismay. This only could it be—this only till he recognised, with his advance, that what made the face dim was the pair of raised hands that covered it and in which, so far from being offered in defiance, it was buried as for dark deprecation. So Brydon, before him, took him in, with every fact of him now, in the higher light, hard and acute—his planted stillness, his vivid truth, his grizzled bent head and white masking hands, his queer actuality of evening-dress, of dangling double eye-glass, of gleaming silk lappet and white linen, of pearl button and gold watch-guard and polished shoe. No portrait by a great modern master could have presented him with more intensity, thrust him out of his frame with more art, as if there had been “treatment,” of the consummate sort, in his every shade and salience. The revulsion, for our friend, had become, before he knew it, immense—this drop, in the act of apprehension, to the sense of his adversary's inscrutable manoeuvre. That meaning at least, while he gaped, it offered him; for he could but gape at his other self in this other anguish, gape 30 as a proof that *he*, standing there for the achieved, the enjoyed, the triumphant life, couldn't be faced in his triumph. Wasn't the proof in the splendid covering hands, strong and completely spread?—so spread and so intentional that, in spite of a special verity that surpassed every other, the fact that one of these hands had lost two fingers, which were reduced to stumps, as if accidentally shot away, the face was effectually guarded and saved.

“Saved,” though, *would* it be?—Brydon breathed his wonder till the very impunity of his attitude and the very insistence of his eyes produced, as he felt, a sudden stir which showed the next instant as a deeper portent, while the head raised itself, the betrayal of a braver purpose. The hands, as he looked, began to move, to open; then, as if deciding in a flash, dropped from the face and left it uncovered and presented. Horror, with the sight, had leaped into Brydon's throat, gasping there in a sound he couldn't utter, for the bared identity was too hideous

as *his*, and his glare was the passion of his protest. The face, *that* face, Spencer Brydon's?—he searched it still, but looking away from it in dismay and denial, falling straight from his height of sublimity. It was unknown, inconceivable, awful, disconnected from any possibility—! He had been "sold," he inwardly moaned, stalking such game as this: the presence before him was a presence, the horror within him a horror, but the waste of his nights had been only grotesque and the success of his adventure an irony. Such an identity fitted his at *no* point, made its alternative monstrous. A thousand times yes, as it came upon him nearer now—the face was the face of a stranger. It came upon him nearer now, quite as one of those expanding fantastic images projected by the magic lantern of childhood; for the stranger, whoever he might be, evil, odious, blatant, vulgar, had advanced as for aggression, and he knew himself give ground. Then harder pressed still, sick with the force of his shock, and falling back as under the hot 20 breath and the roused passion of a life larger than his own, a rage of personality before which his own collapsed, he felt the whole vision turn to darkness and his very feet give way. His head went round; he was going; he had gone.

III

What had next brought him back, clearly—though after how long?—was Mrs. Muldoon's voice, coming to him from quite near, from so near that he seemed 30 presently to see her as kneeling on the ground before him while he lay looking up at her; himself not wholly on the ground, but half-raised and upheld—conscious, yes, of tenderness of support and, more particularly, of a head pillowed in extraordinary softness and faintly refreshing fragrance. He considered, he wondered, his wit but half at his service; then another face intervened, bending more directly over him, and he finally knew that Alice Staverton had made her lap an ample and perfect cushion to him, 40 and that she had to this end seated herself on the lowest degree of the staircase, the rest of his long person remaining stretched on his old black-and-white slabs. They were cold, these marble squares of his youth; but *he* somehow was not, in this rich return of consciousness—the most wonderful hour, little by little, that he had ever known, leaving him, as it did, so gratefully, so abysmally passive, and yet as with a treasure of intelligence waiting all round

him for quiet appropriation; dissolved, he might call it, in the air of the place and producing the golden glow of a late autumn afternoon. He had come back, yes—come back from further away than any man but himself had ever travelled; but it was strange how with this sense what he had come back to seemed really the great thing, and as if his prodigious journey had been all for the sake of it. Slowly but surely his consciousness grew, his vision of his state thus 10 completing itself: he had been miraculously *carried* back—lifted and carefully borne as from where he had been picked up, the uttermost end of an interminable grey passage. Even with this he was suffered to rest, and what had now brought him to knowledge was the break in the long mild motion.

It had brought him to knowledge, to knowledge—yes, this was the beauty of his state; which came to resemble more and more that of a man who has gone to sleep on some news of a great inheritance, and then, after dreaming it away, after profaning it with matters strange to it, has waked up again to serenity of certitude and has only to lie and watch it grow. This was the drift of his patience—that he had only to let it shine on him. He must moreover, with intermissions, still have been lifted and borne; since why and how else should he have known himself, later on, with the afternoon glow intenser, no longer at the foot of his stairs—situated as these now seemed at that dark other end of his tunnel—but on a deep window-bench of his high saloon, over which had been spread, couch-fashion, a mantle of soft stuff lined with grey fur that was familiar to his eyes and that one of his hands kept fondly feeling as for its pledge of truth. Mrs. Muldoon's face had gone, but the other, the second he had recognised, hung over him in a way that showed how he was still propped and pillowed. He took it all in, and the more he took it the more it seemed to suffice: he was as much at peace as if he had had food and drink. It was the two women who had found him, on Mrs. Muldoon's having plied, at her usual hour, her latch-key—and on her having above all arrived while Miss Staverton still lingered near the house. She had been turning away, all anxiety, from worrying the vain bell-handle—her calculation having been of the hour of the good woman's visit; but the latter, blessedly, had come up while she was still there, and they had entered together. He had then lain, beyond the vestibule, very much as he was lying now—quite,

that is, as he appeared to have fallen, but all so wondrously without bruise or gash, only in a depth of stupor. What he most took in, however, at present, with the steadier clearance, was that Alice Staverton had for a long unspeakable moment not doubted he was dead.

"It must have been that I was." He made it out as she held him. "Yes—I can only have died. You brought me literally to life. Only," he wondered, his eyes rising to her, "only, in the name of all the benedictions, how?"

It took her but an instant to bend her face and kiss him, and something in the manner of it, and in the way her hands clasped and locked his head while he felt the cool charity and virtue of her lips, something in all this beatitude somehow answered everything. "And now I keep you," she said.

"Oh keep me, keep me!" he pleaded while her face still hung over him in response to which it dropped again and stayed close, clingly close. It was the seal of their situation—of which he tasted the impress for a long blissful moment in silence. But he came back. "Yet how did you know?"

"I was uneasy. You were to have come, you remember—and you had sent no word."

"Yes, I remember—I was to have gone to you at one today." It caught on to their "old" life and relation—which were so near and so far. "I was still out there in my strange darkness—where was it, what was it? I must have stayed there so long." He could but wonder at the depth and the duration of his swoon.

"Since last night?" she asked with a shade of fear for her possible indiscretion.

"Since this morning—it must have been the cold dim dawn of today. Where have I been," he vaguely wailed, "where have I been?" He felt her hold him close, and it was as if this helped him now to make in all security his mild moan. "What a long dark day!"

All in her tenderness she had waited a moment. "In the cold dim dawn?" she quavered.

But he had already gone on piecing together the parts of the whole prodigy. "As I didn't turn up you came straight—?"

She barely cast about. "I went first to your hotel—where they told me of your absence. You had dined out last evening and hadn't been back since. But they appeared to know you had been at your club."

"So you had the idea of *this*—?"

"Of what?" she asked in a moment.

"Well—of what has happened."

"I believed at least you'd have been here. I've known, all along," she said, "that you've been coming."

"Known" it—?"

"Well, I've believed it. I said nothing to you after that talk we had a month ago—but I felt sure I knew you *would*," she declared.

"That I'd persist, you mean?"

"That you'd see him."

"Ah but I didn't!" cried Brydon with his long wail. "There's somebody—an awful beast, whom I brought, too horribly, to bay. But it's not me."

At this she bent over him again, and her eyes were in his eyes. "No—it's not you." And it was as if, while her face hovered, he might have made out in it, hadn't it been so near, some particular meaning blurred by a smile. "No, thank heaven," she repeated—"it's not you! Of course it wasn't to have been."

"Ah but it *was*," he gently insisted. And he stared before him now as he had been staring for so many weeks. "I was to have known myself."

"You couldn't!" she returned consolingly. And then reverting, and as if to account further for what she had herself done, "But it wasn't only *that*, that you hadn't been at home," she went on. "I waited till the hour at which we had found Mrs. Muldoon that day of my going with you, and she arrived, as I've told you, while, failing to bring any one to the door, I lingered in my despair on the steps. After a little, if she hadn't come, by such a mercy, I should have found means to hunt her up. But it wasn't," said Alice Staverton, as if once more with her fine intention—"it wasn't only that."

His eyes, as he lay, turned back to her. "What more then?"

She met it, the wonder she had stirred. "In the cold dim dawn, you say? Well, in the cold dim dawn of this morning I too saw you."

"Saw *me*—?"

"Saw *him*," said Alice Staverton. "It must have been at the same moment."

He lay an instant taking it in—as if he wished to be quite reasonable. "At the same moment?"

"Yes—in my dream again, the same one I've named to you. He came back to me. Then I knew it for a sign. He had come to you."

At this Brydon raised himself; he had to see her better. She helped him when she understood his movement, and he sat up, steadying himself beside her there on the window-bench and with his right hand grasping her left. "He didn't come to me."

"You came to yourself," she beautifully smiled.

"Ah I've come to myself now—thanks to you, dearest. But this brute, with his awful face—this brute's a black stranger. He's none of *me*, even as I *might* have been," Brydon sturdily declared.

But she kept the clearness that was like the breath of infallibility. "Isn't the whole point that you'd have been different?"

He almost scowled for it. "As different as *that*—?"

Her look again was more beautiful to him than the things of this world. "Haven't you exactly wanted to know *how* different? So this morning," she said, "you appeared to me."

"Like *him*?"

"A black stranger!"

"Then how did you know it was I?"

"Because, as I told you weeks ago, my mind, my imagination, had worked so over what you might, what you mightn't have been—to show you, you see, how I've thought of you. In the midst of that you came to me—that my wonder might be answered. So I knew," she went on; "and believed that, since the question held you too so fast, as you told me that day, you too would see for yourself. And when this morning I again saw I knew it would be because you 30 had—and also then, from the first moment, because you somehow wanted me. *He* seemed to tell me of that. So why," she strangely smiled, "shouldn't I like him?"

It brought Spencer Brydon to his feet. "You 'like' that horror—?"

"I *could* have liked him. And to me," she said, "he was no horror. I had accepted him."

"Accepted'—?" Brydon oddly sounded.

"Before, for the interest of his difference—yes. And as I didn't disown him, as I knew him—which you at last, confronted with him in his difference, so cruelly didn't, my dear—well, he must have been, 10 you see, less dreadful to me. And it may have pleased him that I pitied him."

She was beside him on her feet, but still holding his hand—still with her arm supporting him. But though it all brought for him thus a dim light, "You 'pitied' him?" he grudgingly, resentfully asked.

"He has been unhappy; he has been ravaged," she said.

"And haven't I been unhappy? Am not I—you've only to look at me!—ravaged?"

20 "Ah I don't say I like him *better*," she granted after a thought. "But he's grim, he's worn—and things have happened to him. He doesn't make shift, for sight, with your charming monocle."

"No"—it struck Brydon: "I couldn't have sported mine 'downtown.' They'd have gayed me there."

"His great convex pince-nez—I saw it, I recognised the kind—is for his poor ruined sight. And his poor right hand—!"

"Ah!" Brydon winced—whether for his proved identity or for his lost fingers. Then, "He has a million a year," he lucidly added. "But he hasn't you."

"And he isn't—no, he isn't—you!" she murmured as he drew her to his breast.

HENRY ADAMS (1838-1918)

Henry Brooks Adams was born February 16, 1838, "under the shadow of the Boston State House," as he expressed it in the *Education*. Although he admitted that "probably no child, born in the year, held better cards than he," he seems to have become more and more convinced as he matured that these cards handicapped him in the game of life. But he himself admitted when he was seventy that, "as it happened, he never got to the point of playing the game at all, he lost himself in the study of it, watching the errors of the players," but his temperament and his point of view were at least in part inherited, and the study of his ancestry throws more light on his mind and character than is true of most authors.

Henry Adams was the direct descendant of three generations of as brilliant and distinguished men as America has produced: John Adams, the second President of the United States, John Quincy Adams, who followed in his father's footsteps to the Presidency, and Charles Francis Adams, one of the nation's most successful foreign ministers. But despite this eminence, John Adams was defeated by Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams was beaten by the rough-and-tumble frontier politics of General Jackson, and Charles Francis Adams failed to win the Vice-Presidency in 1848 on the Free Soil ticket. Each of these three men championed a lost cause. Thus despite the unparalleled combined success of the three generations, the Adamses seem to have been more conscious of their defeats than their victories, and Henry Adams was often morbid over the fate which assigned him a passive rôle in national affairs.

The Adamses were usually small-boned and short of stature, but Henry was two or three inches shorter than his brothers, the result, he thought, of a severe attack of scarlet fever at the age of three. Whether or not this illness permanently affected his physique, he was undoubtedly nervous, irritable, and restless, and these traits may have stimulated his mental faculties, as they sometimes do. He seems, also, to have been acutely influenced by his environment. "The chief charm of New England," he wrote in the *Education*, "was harshness of contrasts and extremes of sensibility—a cold that froze the blood, and a heat

that boiled it—so that the pleasure of hating—one's self if no better victim offered—was not its rarest amusement." In winter he lived in Boston with his parents, in summer at his grandfather's eighteenth-century home in Quincy, seven miles away. Thus for Henry, "Town" came to mean "winter confinement, school, rule, discipline," while Quincy meant "liberty, diversity, outlawry, the endless delight of mere sense impressions."

After he grew up, Henry Adams continued to feel a close affinity with the eighteenth-century world of his grandfather. John Quincy Adams had believed with naive faith that God acted according to fixed natural laws, that through science and reason man could learn these laws and by means of them build a perfect society, eliminating war, slavery, and social evil. But science produced the cotton gin, which made slavery profitable, and the construction of railroads and canals multiplied speculators and land-jobbers. It seemed to him that human greed and rapacity would destroy the Republic which his generation had founded with high idealism. He died a disillusioned and embittered old man, as his father, John Adams, had before him, after similar disappointments. Thus the boy, Henry Adams, inherited his double nature and came, as his own character and intellect matured, to look upon the world as an ironic paradox.

Association with his father, grandfather, and their distinguished visitors probably contributed more to the education of Henry Adams than the schools that he attended. His father gave him a writing table in the library, and there he studied his Latin while men like Charles Sumner, the boy's hero, talked politics and the affairs of the world. In this library, stocked mainly with eighteenth-century books, the boy read history, essays, and poetry. Of the more or less contemporary authors, he enjoyed Dickens, Thackeray, and Wordsworth, and his father read Tennyson aloud. But best of all was the table talk, never surpassed, he later recalled, by any conversation which he heard in Europe or America.

Of his formal education, Henry Adams was always contemptuous. He hated Mr. Bixwell's school

in Bedford Street. In 1854 he entered Harvard, but he was bored by his four years there and always looked upon the time as wasted: "It taught little, and that little ill." After his graduation he decided to study law in Germany—why Germany it is difficult to understand. But his parents gave their consent and he sailed in November, 1858, on the best ship available. At the University of Berlin he attended one lecture, discovering to his surprise that he could not understand the language well enough to follow the lecturer. Besides, the Germanic system of higher education depressed him. Harvard, he decided, "was instinct with life as compared with all that he could see of the University of Berlin." Consequently, instead of studying law he spent two years of pleasant travel and amusement on the continent. Music interested him for the first time, and he began his observation and study of cathedrals. As James Truslow Adams says, "He was, indeed, to receive a marvellous training, but it was not one leading to late nineteenth-century power." The result, however, was something better than "power": "It was to lead to one of the greatest contributions any one man of letters has made to American intellectual life."

When Henry Adams arrived back home after his two years in Europe, his father had been elected a member of Congress. The family promptly moved to Washington, and Henry went along as his father's secretary. But the stay was brief. On March 18, 1861, Charles Francis Adams was appointed Minister to England, and again Henry went along as his father's secretary. Many prominent people in England sympathized with the Confederacy, and the new Minister's primary task was to keep Great Britain neutral. At times British antagonism to the Union was so intense that Henry believed his family was surrounded by enemies, though he may have been overly sensitive; but eventually Charles Francis Adams was acknowledged by the British themselves as one of the most popular and successful Ministers the United States had ever sent them. Henry was exhilarated by his father's brilliant achievement. The course of his own life was probably deeply effected by these years in England, which lasted until 1868, when the family returned to America. He had made friends, associated with eminent writers and statesmen, and learned to cherish the British Isles, even the climate, he said.

Two years before Mr. Adams resigned his Ministry the family began discussing Henry's future. The young man was now twenty-eight, and the idea of returning to Harvard to study law did not appeal to him, though his grandfather had done so after seven years of service abroad as secretary, first to the United States Minister to Russia, and then to his father in

London during the peace negotiations of 1813. Henry believed his father agreed with him that "for the law, diplomacy had unfitted him; for diplomacy he already knew too much." No doubt the family as well as Henry himself set a rather high evaluation on the young man's talents and a suitable career for him. Meanwhile Henry, perhaps more by natural inclination than conscious planning, had already taken steps in preparation for a literary career. He read prodigiously—De Tocqueville, Mill, Comte, Darwin, Sir Charles Lyell, and similar writers. He also began writing for the *North American Review*, with journalism now definitely his goal, though perhaps only a stepping stone to other things. For his first article he chose Captain John Smith and the Pocahontas legend as a subject likely "to break as much glass, as any other stone that could be thrown by a beginner." His factual, scholarly debunking of this cherished legend may not have been as sensational as Adams hoped, but it did rankle in the minds of Virginians for many years. Perhaps more important was his long review of Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (published in the *North American Review*, October, 1868), which introduced this epoch-making work in America. He also wrote some informative articles on British banking.

Three months after he returned to America Henry Adams set out for Washington, where he intended to launch himself as a professional journalist and make a name as an expert on national affairs. He arranged to send correspondence to the *Nation* in New York and his heavier articles to the *North American Review*. Washington was then little more than a village, and within a short time he knew everyone of importance. He soon felt himself to be an expert on behind-the-scene politics. In April, 1869, he published in the *North American Review* "The Session," intended to be the first of "a permanent series of annual political reviews," and a second "Session" covered 1869-70. But when President Grant announced his cabinet, Henry Adams decided it would be useless to stay in Washington, because, "after such a miscarriage, no thought of effectual reform could revive for at least one generation. . . ."

Obviously, this descendant of John and John Quincy Adams had higher aims than simply a career in journalism. But before giving up journalism, he had one more card to play. Jay Gould and Jim Fisk had nearly wrecked the country with their manipulation of the stock market. Henry Adams and his brother Charles Francis Adams had painstakingly collected material for an exposé of financial corruption, and Henry now took to England a courageous revelation of "The Gold Conspiracy" which he hoped to publish in the influential *Edinburgh Re-*

view Both the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly Review*, however, were afraid of libel suits, and the article finally appeared in the *Westminster Review* American journals pirated the essay on a large scale, and in the next presidential campaign Grant's opponents distributed copies by the thousand But Henry Adams decided to give up his journalistic ambitions He later blamed his family for opposing his return to Washington, though probably he was already tired of this uncertain road to national influence, his real goal

The new career which opened to him in 1870 was an academic one, for which he had few obvious qualifications and apparently at first little inclination But his family had decided that a professorship at Harvard would give him the opportunities which he needed to develop his abilities and gain recognition, and, fortunately, Henry's brother-in-law, Professor E. W. Gurney, was chairman of the Department of History at Harvard An assistant professorship was first offered to him by President Eliot while he was in England trying to sell his "Gold Conspiracy" article, but Henry declined After his return, however, he was offered an assistant professorship in medieval history combined with the editorship of the *North American Review* This position Henry Adams accepted The editorship was perhaps more wearisome than he had expected, but he quickly developed into a stimulating and even popular teacher of history He conducted his course as a seminar, and he and his students enjoyed exploring the subject together.

During his seven years on the Harvard faculty Henry Adams matured rapidly On a trip to Colorado in 1871 he met Clarence King, a geologist educated at Yale, but now, in Adams' words, "saturated with the sunshine of the Sierras" King became one of Henry Adams' closest friends, especially later in Washington. A second beneficial influence on the young Harvard professor was his marriage in 1872 to Marian Hooper, the daughter of an eminent Boston surgeon and heiress to a considerable fortune. Granted a year's leave of absence, Professor Adams took his bride to Europe for a year. Marian Hooper was a charming young lady of refinement and taste, and socially the match was thought to be exceptionally fortunate

After the honeymoon trip Henry Adams returned to teaching for a few years, but he became so dissatisfied that in 1877 he and Mrs. Adams moved to Washington, though they maintained a summer home at Beverly, Massachusetts One excuse for going to Washington was to be near the Congressional Library, and Henry did make good use of it for the next decade In 1877 he published *Documents Relat-*

ing to New England Federalism, 1800-1815, a subject of personal interest because of the rôle which John Quincy Adams had played in the Federalist controversy, but the editor refrained from comment except for a short introduction The book exerted a valuable influence in demonstrating to history students the importance of original sources Two years later Adams collected *The Writings of Albert Gallatin* in three volumes and added a lengthy *Life* in a fourth volume In 1882 he published a biography of John Randolph

But probably Henry Adams' main reason for settling in Washington can be found in the novel, *Democracy*, which he published anonymously in 1880 It is the story mainly of a corrupt politician who thwarts the ideals on which the Republic was founded (the same old theme that haunted the latter days of John and John Quincy Adams), but of greater autobiographical interest is the heroine, a widow, Mrs. Madeleine Lee She had forsaken New York society in order to establish at the national capital a salon where she could "see with her own eyes the action of primary forces, to touch with her own hand the massive machinery of society" She wanted "power," the word which occurs so many times in Henry Adams' letters before his wife's death All witnesses agree that Mrs. Adams did not resemble the aggressive Mrs. Lee, but perhaps her husband wished that she did This supposition is strengthened by the events following the publication in 1884 of a second novel, *Esther*, under the pseudonym "Fiances Snow Compton." Esther is believed to have been the portrait of Mrs. Adams—or it might be better to say a caricature In the story Esther is torn between her love for a clergyman and her loyalty to her sceptic father, and loyalty wins over love and religion Some critics have thought that Esther's desire "to get out of life rather than suffer such pain, such terror, such misery of helplessness" after her father's death may have given Mrs. Adams the suggestion of escape from her own anguish.

Although the situation could not have been entirely parallel, Mrs. Adams did become despondent after her father's death and on December 6, 1885, committed suicide by taking cyanide Henry Adams could not have been more crushed by his wife's death if he had thought himself guilty, and possibly he did He spent the remainder of his years as if he were doing penance As literature his two novels are dismal failures, but they raise many curious questions about the spiritual biography of Henry Adams and are, therefore, of special interest to the student of his life.

In the spring following his wife's tragic death Henry Adams interrupted his historical studies and

writing and took a long trip to Japan with his good friend, John La Farge, the painter. While on this trip Adams conceived the idea of a memorial statue which he later had the famous sculptor, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, erect at Mrs. Adams' grave in Rock Creek Cemetery, Washington. The recumbent figure, which soon became a renowned piece of American sculpture, was one of the first evidences of Henry Adams' interest in Oriental mysticism. In his instructions to Saint-Gaudens, Adams asked him to study pictures of the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel at Rome and of Chinese statues, especially of Buddha, but he left specific plans entirely to the sculptor. The finished bronze has puzzled many observers. Saint-Gaudens called it "the Mystery of the Hereafter . . . beyond pain and beyond joy." Adams called it "The Peace of God," and said that its meaning would be obvious to any Asiatic. James Truslow Adams' comment is that "from the love of Adams and his wife, from the brooding peace of the East to which Adams fled after his tragedy, there has arisen amidst the most frantic life of incessant activity that the world has ever seen, the figure of eternal calm beyond desire." For Henry Adams the figure was truly symbolic, for he spent the remainder of his life searching for spiritual peace and philosophical unity.

Despite his grief, Adams managed to finish his ambitious work, a *History of the United States during the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison*, published between 1885 and 1891 in nine volumes. As usual with his books, this had a personal meaning for him, because in it he was able to defend his grandfather's break with the Federalist party. But the work has been justly praised for its comprehensiveness and its integrated exposition of the political and social ideas of the period. Through his research and studies Adams was beginning to see history in terms of energy.

His *History* finished, Adams continued his restless travels, usually contriving to spend his summers in Europe. During the financial panic in 1893 his brothers, Brooks and Charles Francis, called him back to Boston, fearing bankruptcy, but they weathered the storm. Then Henry resumed his travels, visiting the Chicago Exposition, going in 1894 to the West Indies for the winter, to Yellowstone for the summer, and after pretty well covering American railway routes, visiting Mexico. He was in the latter country when the American Historical Association, to which he had been elected president, held its annual meeting. Not being able to deliver the presidential address in person, he mailed back a long essay on "The Tendency of History," in which he urged

teachers of history to search for a mathematical law for social phenomena.

An extensive study of scientific writings had convinced Henry Adams that thought was simply a form of energy, and that the laws of physics could be applied to social science. Brooks Adams was working on his book, *Civilization and Decay*, a forerunner of the Oswald Spengler theory of the disintegration of Western civilization, and Henry originally intended his essay as a preface to his brother's book, which he regarded as not sufficiently philosophical. What he wanted to do was to make history a science: "Any science of history must be absolute, like other sciences, and must fix with mathematical certainty the path which human society has got to follow." But it was not until 1909 that he evolved a formula which he believed valid. In "The Rule of Phase Applied to History," he used "the law of squares" to illustrate the ever-increasing acceleration of man's control over energy. For example:

Supposing the Mechanical Phase to have lasted 300 years, from 1600 to 1900, the next or Electric Phase would have a life equal to $\sqrt{300}$, or about seventeen years and a half, when—that is, in 1917—it would pass into another or Ethereal Phase, which, for half a century, science has been promising, and which would last only $\sqrt{17.5}$, or about four years, and bring Thought to the limit of its possibilities in the year 1921. It may well be! . . . but even if the life of the previous phase, 1600–1900, were extended another hundred years . . . the Ethereal Phase would last till about 2025.

In the "Atomic Age" these predictions are not as absurd as they appeared in 1909.

Before publishing his theory of "phase" applied to history, Henry Adams had reached other conclusions more important in his development as a writer. Even in his attempt to discover scientific law for human history he decided that society was already on the retrograde. But eventually convinced that "chaos is the law of nature; order the dream of man," he began searching for the period in civilization when man attained most order, unity, and spiritual poise. The answer, he concluded, was the thirteenth century in Europe, especially France, during the height of the worship of the Virgin. The book which this conclusion led him to write, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (privately published in 1904), has frequently been regarded as Henry Adams' homage to the Virgin, to whom he wrote a prayer which was found in his wallet after his death; but however well it may have filled a personal need, this work is too subtle and ironical to be entirely the product of a religious conversion. As one result of his years of studying medieval history and literature, and visiting year after

year the great cathedrals of France, Adams chose Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres as two symbols of medieval unity and energy, the one of military power during the time of the Norman conquest and the other of the spiritual and social power of the Virgin. This book is remarkable also for the author's integration of the multifarious aspects of the two ages—religion, politics, art, literature, and social customs.

Since Adams was beginning to develop a thesis, however, he probably found more unity in these medieval periods than ever existed in reality. The thesis was his theory of the increasing chaos of society. Believing his own age to be near complete disintegration (in 1903 he declared "My figures coincide in fixing 1950 as the year when the world must go to smash"), his imagination seized upon the remote thirteenth century as the antithesis of everything which he feared and detested in the twentieth century. *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* was, therefore, only one act of the drama. The final act was another symbolical book, Henry Adams' own spiritual autobiography, which he wrote in the third person as *The Education of Henry Adams*. The use of the third person enabled him to assume an ironic detachment that strengthened his didactic purpose. It is not a true autobiography. *The Education* is the record of incessant failure. Every good intention and high ideal leads to frustration in the book. But Henry Adams' life included triumphs as well as some failures, and his mood was not habitually morose and pessimistic, as his many exuberant letters to his friends testify. *The Education* is a masterpiece of analysis and condemnation of intellectual chaos, but it is more didactic than personal.

From the third-rate novels to the masterly *Education*, all the writings of Henry Adams record the

development of one of the most sensitive and astute minds in the history of American literature. Some of the bitter irony in these writings is the heritage of the frustrated Adams family, but this heritage enabled the historian-philosopher to foresee events and understand modern dilemmas with such clarity and accuracy that one might almost call him an inspired prophet. For example, in 1897 he predicted in a personal letter "For the last generation, since 1865, Germany has been the great disturbing element of the world, and until its expansive force is decidedly exhausted, I see neither political nor economic equilibrium possible." In 1901 he called Germany a "powder magazine," declaring, "All her neighbors are in terror for fear she will explode, and sooner or later, explode she must." Unlike most of his countrymen, Adams was not surprised when war finally broke out in 1914. In 1904 he also wrote prophetically "I am half crazy with fear that Russia is sailing straight into another French revolution which may upset Europe and us, too."

Today the dangers of scientific progress are obvious, but probably few Americans believed in 1902 "that science is to wreck us, and that we are like monkeys monkeying with a loaded shell, we don't in the least know or care where our practically infinite energies come from or will lead us to." Since the invention of the atomic bomb Americans hear almost hourly an echo of the opinion which Adams expressed nearly half a century ago. "Some day science may have the existence of mankind in its power, and the human race commit suicide by blowing up the world." With this danger now apparent, the modern student should find especially rewarding the study of a man who had the wisdom to write the chapter on "The Virgin and the Dynamo" in the *Education* early in the destructive twentieth century.

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FROM

History of the United States during the First Administration of James Madison ¹

CHAPTER IV

Harrison and Tecumthe

Although no one doubted that the year 1812 was to witness a new convulsion of society, if signs of panic occurred they were less marked in crowded countries where vast interests were at stake, than in remote regions which might have been thought as safe from Napoleon's wars as from those of Ghenghis Khan.² As in the year 1754 a petty fight between two French and English scouting parties on the banks of the Youghioghenny River,³ far in the American wilderness, began a war that changed the balance of the world, so in 1811 an encounter in the Indian country, on the banks of the Wabash, began a fresh convulsion which ended only with the fall of Napoleon. The battle of Tippecanoe was a premature outbreak of the great wars of 1812.

Governor William Henry Harrison, of the Indiana Territory, often said he could tell by the conduct of his Indians, as by a thermometer, the chances of war and peace for the United States as estimated in the Cabinet at London. The remark was curious, but not surprising. Uneasiness would naturally be greatest

where least control and most irritation existed. Such a region was the Northwestern Territory.⁴ Even the spot where violence would break out might be predicted as somewhere on the waterline of the Maumee and the Wabash, between Detroit at one extremity and Vincennes at the other. If a guess had been ventured that the most probable point would be found on that line, about half way between Lake Erie and the Ohio River, the map would have shown that Tippecanoe Creek, where it flowed into the Wabash, corresponded with the rough suggestion.

The Indiana Territory was created in 1800; and the former delegate of the whole Northwestern Territory, William Henry Harrison, was then appointed governor of the new division. Until the year 1809, Illinois formed part of the Indiana Territory; but its single settlement at Kaskaskia was remote. The Indiana settlement consisted mainly of two tracts,—one on the Ohio, opposite Louisville in Kentucky, at the falls, consisting of about one hundred and fifty thousand acres, called Clark's Grant; the other, at Vincennes on the Wabash, where the French had held a post, without a definite grant of lands, under an old Indian treaty, and where the Americans took whatever rights the French enjoyed. One hundred miles of wilderness separated these two tracts. In 1800, their population numbered about twenty-five hundred persons; in 1810, nearly twenty-five thousand.

Northward and westward, from the bounds of

¹ New York, 1889-91, 9 vols. The Tippecanoe affair, vol. II (1890).

² Mongol conqueror (1167-1227) of northern China, Korea, northern Indian, Persia (Iran, Iraq), and part of Russia.

³ Flows into Monongahela, near present city of Pittsburgh. General Braddock was defeated there in 1754, and the French renamed the fort Duquesne.

⁴ Region northwest of Ohio River, ceded to the Federal Government by States owning or claiming it, finally organized in 1799.

these districts the Indian country stretched to the Lakes and the Mississippi, unbroken except by military posts at Fort Wayne and Fort Dearborn, or Chicago, and a considerable settlement of white people in the neighborhood of the fortress of Detroit. Some five thousand Indian warriors held this vast region, and were abundantly able to expel every white man from Indiana if their organization had been as strong as their numbers. The whites were equally eager to expel the Indians, and showed the wish openly

Governor Harrison was the highest authority on matters connected with the northwestern Indians. During eight years of Harrison's government Jefferson guided the Indian policy, and as long as Jefferson insisted on the philanthropic principles which were his pride, Harrison, whose genius lay in ready adaptation, took his tone from the President, and wrote in a different spirit from that which he would have taken had he represented an aggressive chief. His account of Indian affairs offered an illustration of the law accepted by all historians in theory, but adopted by none in practice, which former ages called "fate," and metaphysicians called "necessity," but which modern science has refined into the "survival of the fittest." No acid ever worked more mechanically on a vegetable fibre than the white man acted on the Indian. As the line of American settlements approached, the nearest Indian tribes withered away.

Harrison reported conscientiously the incurable evils which attended the contact of the two hostile forms of society. The first, but not the most serious, was that the white man, though not allowed to settle beyond the Indian border, could not be prevented from trespassing far and wide on Indian territory in search of game. The practice of hunting on Indian lands, in violation of law and existing treaties, had grown into a monstrous abuse. The Kentucky settlers crossed the Ohio River every autumn to kill deer, bear, and buffalo for their skins, which they had no more right to take than they had to cross the Alleghenies, and shoot or trap the cows and sheep in the farm-yards of Bucks County. Many parts of the Northwestern Territory which as late as 1795 abounded in game, ten years afterward contained not game enough to support the small Indian parties passing through them, and had become worth-

less for Indian purposes except as a barrier to further encroachment.*

The tribes that owned these lands were forced either to remove elsewhere, or to sell their old hunting grounds to the government for supplies or for an annuity. The tribes that sold, remaining near the settlements to enjoy their annuity, were more to be pitied than those that removed, which were destined to destruction by war. Harrison reported that contact with white settlements never failed to ruin them. "I can tell at once," he wrote in 1801, † "upon looking at an Indian whom I may chance to meet, whether he belongs to a neighboring or to a more distant tribe. The latter is generally well-clothed, healthy, and vigorous, the former half-naked, filthy, and enfeebled by intoxication, and many of them without arms excepting a knife, which they carry for the most villainous purposes." Harrison estimated the number of Indian warriors then in the whole valley of the Wabash as not exceeding six hundred, the sale of whiskey was unlawful, yet they were supposed to consume six thousand gallons of whiskey a year, and their drunkenness so often ended in murder that among three of the tribes scarcely a chief survived.

"I have had much difficulty," wrote Harrison in the same letter from Vincennes, "with the small tribes in this immediate neighborhood, namely the Piankeshaws, the Weas, and the Eel River Miamis. These three tribes form a body of the most depraved wretches on earth. They are daily in this town in considerable numbers, and are frequently intoxicated to the number of thirty or forty at once, when they commit the greatest disorders, drawing their knives and stabbing every one they meet with, breaking open the houses of the citizens, killing their cattle and hogs, and breaking down their fences. But in all their frolics they generally suffer the most themselves. They kill each other without mercy. Some years ago as many as four were found dead in a morning; and although those murders were actually committed in the streets of the town, yet no attempt to punish them has ever been made."

The Piankeshaws were reduced to twenty-five or thirty warriors, the Weas and Eel River Indians were mere remnants. The more powerful tribes at a distance saw with growing alarm the steady destruction of the border warriors; and the intelligent Indians everywhere forbade the introduction of whiskey, and

* Dawson's *Harrison*, p. 8.

† Dawson's *Harrison*, p. 11.

tried to create a central authority to control the degraded tribes.

A third evil was much noticed by Harrison. By treaty, if an Indian killed a white man the tribe was bound to surrender the murderer for trial by American law; while if a white man killed an Indian, the murderer was also to be tried by a white jury. The Indians surrendered their murderers, and white juries at Vincennes hung them without scruple; but no jury in the territory ever convicted a white man of murdering an Indian. Harrison complained to the President of the wanton and atrocious murders committed by white men on Indians, and the impossibility of punishing them in a society where witnesses would not appear, criminals broke jail, and juries refused to convict. Throughout the territory the people avowed the opinion that a white man ought not in justice to suffer for killing an Indian; * and many of them, like the uncle of Abraham Lincoln,† thought it a virtuous act to shoot an Indian at sight. Harrison 20 could combat this code of popular law only by proclamations offering rewards for the arrest of murderers, who were never punished when arrested. In 1801 the Delawares alone complained of six unatoned murders committed on their tribe since the Treaty of Greenville, and every year increased the score.

"All these injuries," reported Harrison in 1801, "the Indians have hitherto borne with astonishing patience; but though they discover no disposition to make war on the United States at present, I am confident that most of the tribes would eagerly seize any favorable opportunity for that purpose; and should the United States be at war with any of the European nations who are known to the Indians, there would probably be a combination of more than nine tenths of the Northern tribes against us, unless some means are used to conciliate them." 30

So warmly were the French remembered by the Indians, that if Napoleon had carried out his Louisiana scheme of 1802 ⁵ he could have counted on the active support of nearly every Indian tribe on the Mississippi and the Lakes; from Pensacola to Detroit his orders would have been obeyed. Toward England

* Dawson's *Harrison*, pp. 7, 31, 32.

† *Life of Lincoln*, by Hay and Nicolay, chapter I.

⁵ President Jefferson was spurred to purchase the Louisiana Territory by the rumor that Napoleon had acquired control of it from Spain and planned to rebuild the French Empire in North America. 40

the Indians felt no such sentimental attachment; but interest took the place of sentiment. Their natural line of trade was with the Lakes, and their relations with the British trading-posts at Malden, opposite Detroit, became more and more close with every new quarrel between Washington and London.

President Jefferson earnestly urged the Indians to become industrious cultivators of the soil; but even for that reform one condition was indispensable. The Indians must be protected from contact with the whites; and during the change in their mode of life, they must not be drugged, murdered, or defrauded. Trespasses on Indian land and purchases of tribal territory must for a time cease, until the Indian tribes should all be induced to adopt a new system. Even then the reform would be difficult, for Indian warriors thought death less irksome than daily labor; and men who did not fear death were not easily driven to toil.

There President Jefferson's philanthropy stopped. His greed for land equalled that of any settler on the border, and his humanity to the Indian suffered the suspicion of having among its motives the purpose of gaining the Indian lands for the whites. Jefferson's policy in practice offered a reward for Indian extinction, since he not only claimed the territory of every extinct tribe on the doctrine of paramount sovereignty, but deliberately ordered * his Indian agents to tempt the tribal chiefs into debt in order to oblige them to sell the tribal lands, which did not belong to them, but to their tribes:—

"To promote this disposition to exchange lands which they have to spare and we want, for necessities which we have to spare and they want, we shall push our trading-houses, and be glad to see the good and influential individuals among them in debt; because we observe that when these debts get beyond what the individuals can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of lands."

No one would have felt more astonishment than Jefferson had some friend told him that this policy, which he believed to be virtuous, was a conspiracy to induce trustees to betray their trusts; and that in morals it was as improper as though it were not virtuously intended. Shocked as he would have been at such a method of obtaining the neighboring estate of any Virginia family, he not only suggested but vigorously carried out the system toward the Indians.

* Jefferson to Harrison, Feb. 27, 1803; *Works*, iv, 471.

In 1804 and 1805, Governor Harrison made treaties with the Miamis, Eel Rivers, Weas, Piankeshaws, and Delawares,—chiefly the tribes he called “a body of the most depraved wretches upon earth,”—by which he obtained the strip of country, fifty miles wide, between the Ohio and the White rivers, thus carrying the boundary back toward the Wabash. The treaty excited deep feeling among the better Indians throughout the territory, who held long debates on their means of preventing its execution.

Among the settlers in Indiana, an internal dispute mingled with the dangers of Indian relations. For this misfortune Harrison himself was partially to blame. A Virginian by birth, naturally inclined toward Southern influences, he shared the feelings of the Kentucky and Virginia slave-owners who wanted the right of bringing their slaves with them into the Territory, contrary to the Ordinance of 1787. The men who stood nearest the governor were earnest and active in the effort to repeal or evade the prohibition of slavery, and they received from Harrison all the support he could give them. With his approval, successive appeals were made to Congress. Perhaps the weightiest act of John Randolph’s career as leader of the Republican majority in the House was to report, March 2, 1803, that the extension of slavery into Indiana was “highly dangerous and inexpedient” and that the people of Indiana “would at no distant day find ample remuneration for a temporary privation of labor and immigration” in the beneficence of a free society. Caesar Rodney, of Delaware, in March, 1804, made a report to a contrary effect, recommending a suspension for ten years of the anti-slavery clause in the Ordinance, but the House did not act upon it.

The advocates of a slave system, with Harrison’s co-operation, then decided that the Territory should pass into the second grade, which under the Ordinance of 1787 could be done when the population should number five thousand male whites of full age. The change was effected in the winter of 1804–1805, by means open to grave objection. Thenceforward Harrison shared his power with a Legislative Council and a House of Representatives, while the legislature chose a territorial delegate to Congress. The first territorial legislature, in 1805, which was wholly under Harrison’s influence, passed an Act, subsequently revised and approved Sept. 17, 1807, per-

* Dunn’s *Indiana (American Commonwealths)*, p. 324.

mitting owners of slaves to bring them into the Territory and keep them there for a number of days, during which time the slave might be emancipated on condition of binding himself to service for a term of years to which the law set no limit †

The overpowering influence and energy of the governor and his Southern friends gave them during these years undisputed control. Yet the anti-slavery sentiment was so strong as to make the governor uncomfortable, and almost to endanger his personal safety, until at last, in 1808, the issue was fairly brought before the people in the elections. Both in that and in the following year the opponents of slavery outvoted and defeated the governor’s party. Feelings became exceedingly bitter, and the Territory was distracted by feuds which had no small influence on matters of administration, and on the Indian troubles most of all. Between the difficulties of introducing negroes and expelling Indians, Harrison found that his popularity had been lessened, if not lost ‡. He could not fail to see that a military exploit was perhaps his only hope of recovering it, and for such an exploit he had excuses enough.

The treaties of 1804–1805, which threatened the Indians with immediate loss of their hunting-grounds in the Wabash valley, caused a fermentation peculiarly alarming because altogether new. Early in 1806 Harrison learned that a Shawnee Indian, claiming to be a prophet, had gathered a number of warriors about him at Cincinnati, in Ohio, and was preaching doctrines that threatened trouble. Harrison attributed the mischief to the Prophet, but he learned in time that the Prophet’s brother Tecumseh—or more properly Tecumthe—gave the movement its chief strength.

Indians and whites soon recognized Tecumthe as a phenomenon. His father was a Shawnee warrior, in no way distinguished; his mother, a Creek or Cherokee Indian, captured and adopted by the Shawance,—and of these parents three children at one birth were born about the year 1780, a few miles from Springfield, Ohio. The third brother lived and died obscure, Tecumthe and the Prophet became famous, although they were not chiefs of their tribe, and had no authority of office on birth. Such of the chiefs as were in the pay or under the power of the United States government were jealous of their influ-

† Dillon’s *History of Indiana*, App. G. p. 617.

‡ Dunn’s *Indiana*, p. 397.

ence, and had every reason for wishing to suppress the leaders of a movement avowedly designed to overthrow the system of tribal independence. From the first, Tecumthe aimed at limiting the authority of the tribes and their chiefs in order to build up an Indian confederacy, embracing not the chiefs but the warriors of all the tribes, who should act as an Indian Congress and assume joint ownership of Indian lands.

This scheme was hostile to the plans though not to the professions of President Jefferson. Its object was to prevent the piecemeal sale of Indian lands by petty tribal chiefs, under pressure of government agents. No one could honestly deny that the object was lawful and even regular; for in the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, which was the only decisive authority or precedent, the United States had admitted and acted on the principle for which Tecumthe contended,—of accepting its cessions of land, not from single tribes, but from the whole body of northwestern Indians, without entering on the subject of local ownership.* 20 Governor Harrison and President Jefferson were of course aware of the precedent, and decided to disregard it † in order to act on the rule better suited to their purposes; but their decision was in no way binding on Tecumthe or the tribes who were parties to the treaty of Greenville.

During the year 1807 Tecumthe's influence was increased by the "Chesapeake" excitement, which caused the Governor-general of Canada to intrigue among the Indians for aid in case of war. Probably 30 their increase of influence led the Prophet and his brother, in May or June, 1808, to establish themselves on Tippecanoe Creek, the central point of Indian strategy and politics. Vincennes lay one hundred and fifty miles below, barely four-and-twenty hours down the stream of the Wabash; Fort Dearborn, or Chicago, was a hundred miles to the northwest; Fort Wayne the same distance to the northeast; and excepting a short portage, the Tippecanoe Indians could paddle their canoes to Malden 40 and Detroit in one direction, or to any part of the waters of the Ohio and Mississippi in the other. At the mouth of Tippecanoe Creek the reformers laid out a village that realized Jefferson's wish, for the Indians there drank no whiskey, and avowed them-

selves to be tillers of the soil. Their professions seemed honest. In August, 1808, the Prophet came to Vincennes and passed two weeks with Governor Harrison, who was surprised to find that no temptation could overcome the temperance of the Prophet's followers. The speech then made in the public talk with the governor remains the only record of the Prophet's words, and of the character he wished to pretend, if not to adopt.

"I told all the redskins," he said to Harrison, "that the way they were in was not good, and that they ought to abandon it; that we ought to consider ourselves as one man, but we ought to live agreeable to our several customs,—the red people after their mode, and the white people after theirs; particularly that they should not drink whiskey; that it was not made for them, but the white people, who alone know how to use it; and that it is the cause of all the mischiefs which the Indians suffer. . . . Determine to listen to nothing that is bad; do not take up the tomahawk, should it be offered by the British or by the Long-knives; do not meddle with anything that does not belong to you, but mind your own business, and cultivate the ground, that your women and children may have enough to live on. I now inform you that it is our intention to live in peace with our father and his children forever."

Whatever want of confidence Harrison felt in these professions of peace, he recorded his great surprise at finding the temperance to be real; and every one who visited the settlement at Tippecanoe bore witness to the tillage, which seemed to guarantee a peaceful intent; for if war had been in Tecumthe's mind, he would not have placed town, crops, and stock within easy reach of destruction.

Nothing could be more embarrassing to Jefferson than to see the Indians follow his advice; for however well-disposed he might be, he could not want the Indians to become civilized, educated, or competent to protect themselves,—yet he was powerless to protect them. The Prophet asked that the sale of liquor should be stopped; but the President could no more prevent white settlers from selling liquor to the Indians than he could prevent the Wabash from flowing. The tribes asked that white men who murdered Indians should be punished; but the President could no more execute such malefactors than he could execute the smugglers who defied his embargo.⁶ The Indians had rights recognized by law, by treaty, and by custom, on which their existence depended; but

* Treaty of Greenville; *State Papers, Indian Affairs*, p. 562.

† Harrison to the Secretary of War, March 22, 1814; Drake's *Tecumseh*, p. 161.

⁶ In 1807 Congress passed an act forbidding any American vessel to depart for a foreign port, a desperate attempt to stop the impressment of American sailors into the British Navy.

these rights required force to maintain them, and on the Wabash, President Jefferson had less police power than the Prophet himself controlled

Wide separation could alone protect the Indians from the whites, and Tecumthe's scheme depended for its only chance of success on holding the white settlements at a distance. The Prophet said nothing to Harrison on that point, but his silence covered no secret. So notorious was the Indian hostility to land-cessions, that when Governor Hull of Michigan Territory, in November, 1807, negotiated another such cession at Detroit,* the Indian agent at Fort Wayne not only doubted its policy, but insinuated that it might have been dictated by the British in order to irritate the Indians, and he reported that the Northern Indians talked of punishing with death the chiefs who signed it †

Aware of the danger, Harrison decided to challenge it. The people of his Territory wanted the lands of the Wabash, even at the risk of war. The settlement at Tippecanoe was supposed to contain no more than eighty or a hundred warriors, with four or five times that number within a radius of fifty miles. No immediate outbreak was to be feared, and Harrison, "conceiving that a favorable opportunity then offered" ‡ for carrying the boundary from the White River to the Wabash, asked authority to make a new purchase. Secretary Eustis, July 15, 1809, wrote him a cautious letter, § giving the required permission, but insisting that, "to prevent any future dissatisfaction, the chiefs of all the nations who had or pretended right to these lands" were to be present as consenting parties to the treaty. On this authority Harrison once more summoned together "the most depraved wretches upon earth,"—Miami, Eel Rivers, Delawares, Pottawatomies, and Kickapoos,—and obtained from them, Sept. 30, 1809, several enormous cessions of territory which cut into the heart of the Indian country for nearly a hundred miles up both banks of the Wabash valley. These transfers included about three million acres

Harrison knew that this transaction would carry despair to the heart of every Indian in his Territory. The Wabash valley alone still contained game. De-

* Treaty of Nov. 7, 1807, *State Papers, Indian Affairs*, p. 747.

† Dawson's *Harrison*, p. 106.

‡ Dawson, p. 129.

§ Eustis to Harrison, July 15, 1809. *Indian Affairs*, p. 761.

prived of their last resource, these Indians must fall back to perish in the country of the Chippewas and Sioux, their enemies. * Already impoverished by the decrees of Napoleon, the Orders in Council, and the embargo, which combined to render their peltry valueless, so that they could scarcely buy the powder and shot to kill their game, † the Indians had thenceforward no choice but to depend on British assistance. Harrison's treaty immediately strengthened the influence of Tecumthe and the Prophet. The Wyandots, or Hurons, regarded by all the Indian tribes in the Territory as first in dignity and influence, joined Tecumthe's league, and united in a declaration that the late cessions were void, and would not be recognized by the tribes. The winter of 1809-1810 passed quietly, but toward May, 1810, alarming reports reached Vincennes of gatherings at the Prophet's town, and of violence to be expected. When the salt, which was part of the usual annuity, reached Tippecanoe, Tecumthe refused to accept it, and drove the boatmen away. He charged the American government with deceiving the Indians, and he insisted, as the foundation of future peace, that the cessions of 1809 should be annulled, and no future cessions should be good unless made by all the tribes.

Harrison knew that his treaties of 1809 opened an aggressive policy, which must naturally end in an Indian war. Some of the best citizens in the Territory thought that the blame for the consequences ought not to rest on the Indians ‡. Since the election of Madison to the Presidency in November, 1808, war with England had been so imminent, and its effect on the Indians so marked, that Harrison could not help seeing the opportunity of a military career, and he had given much study to military matters §. His plans, if they accorded with his acts, included an Indian war, in which he should take the initiative. His treaties of 1809 left him no choice, for after making such a war inevitable, his only safety lay in crushing the Indians before the British could openly aid them. Unfortunately, neither Madison nor Eustis understood his purpose, or would have liked it. They

* Harrison to the Secretary of War, March 22, 1814; Drake's *Tecumseh*, p. 162.

† Dawson, p. 142.

‡ Harrison to Eustis, July 4, 1810, Dawson, p. 149. Harrison to Governor Scott, Dec. 13, 1811; Dawson, p. 244. Badollet's Letters to Gallatin; Gallatin MSS. Dillon's *Indiana*, p. 455.

§ Harrison to Governor Scott of Kentucky, March 10, 1809; Dawson, p. 119.

approved his land-purchases, which no Administration and no citizen would have dared reject; but they were very unwilling to be drawn into an Indian war, however natural might be such a consequence of the purchases.

So it happened that as early as the summer of 1810 war was imminent in the Wabash and Maumee valleys, and perhaps only British influence delayed it. British interests imperatively required that Tecumthe's confederacy should be made strong, and should 10 not be wrecked prematurely in an unequal war. From Malden, opposite Detroit, the British traders loaded the American Indians with gifts and weapons; urged Tecumthe to widen his confederacy, to unite all the tribes, but not to begin war till he received the signal from Canada. All this was duly reported at Washington.* On the other hand, Harrison sent for Tecumthe; and August 12, 1810, the Indian chief came for a conference to Vincennes. Indians and whites, in considerable numbers, armed and alert, fear- 20 ing treachery on both sides, witnessed the interview.

Tecumthe took, as his right, the position he felt himself to occupy as the most powerful American then living,—who, a warrior himself, with five thousand warriors behind him, held in one hand an alliance with Great Britain, in the other an alliance with the Indians of the southwest. Representatives of the Wyandots, Kickapoos, Pottawatomies, Ottawas, and Winnebagoes announced the adhesion of their tribes 30 to the Shawanec Confederacy and the election of Tecumthe as their chief. In this character he avowed to Harrison, in the broadest and boldest language, the scope of his policy:—†

“Brother, since the peace was made in 1795 you have killed some of the Shawanee, Winnebagoes, Delawares, and Miamis, and you have taken our land from us; and I do not see how we can remain at peace with you if you continue to do so. . . . You try to force the red people to do some injury; it is you that are pushing them on to do mischief. You endeavor to make distinctions; you wish to prevent 40 the Indians from doing as we wish them,—from uniting and considering their land as the common property of the whole. You take tribes aside and advise them not to come into this measure. . . . The reason, I tell you, is this: You want, by your distinctions of Indian tribes, in allotting to each a particular tract of land, to make them to war with each other. You never see an Indian come and endeavor to make the white people do so. You are con-

tinually driving the red people; and at last you will drive them into the great lake, where they cannot either stand or work.

“Since my residence at Tippecanoe we have endeavored to level all distinctions, to destroy village chiefs by whom all mischief is done: it is they who sell our lands to the Americans. Our object is to let all our affairs be transacted by warriors. This land that was sold, and the goods that were given for it, was only done by a few. The treaty was afterward brought here, and the Weas were induced to give their consent because of their small numbers. . . . In the future we are prepared to punish those chiefs who may come forward to propose to sell their land. If you continue to purchase of them, it will produce war among the different tribes, and at last I do not know what will be the consequence to the white people.”

Earnestly denying the intention of making war, Tecumthe still declared that any attempt on Harrison's part to enter into the possession of the land lately ceded would be resisted by force. In the vehemence of discussion he used language in regard to the United States which caused great excitement, and broke up the meeting for that day; but he lost no time in correcting the mistake. After the conference closed, he had a private interview with Harrison, and repeated his official ultimatum. He should only with great reluctance make war on the United States: against whom he had no other complaint than their land-purchases; he was extremely anxious to be their friend, and if the governor would prevail upon the President to give up the lands lately purchased, and agree never to make another treaty without the consent of all the tribes, Tecumthe pledged himself to be a faithful ally to the United States, and to assist them in all their wars with the English; otherwise he would be obliged to enter into an English alliance.

Harrison told him that no such condition had the least chance of finding favor with the Government. “Well,” rejoined Tecumthe, as though he had expected the answer, “as the great chief is to decide the matter, I hope the Great Spirit will put sense enough 40 into his head to induce him to direct you to give up this land. It is true, he is so far off he will not be injured by the war; he may sit still in his town and drink his wine, while you and I will have to fight out.”

Therewith Tecumthe and Harrison parted, each to carry on his preparations for the conflict. The Secretary of War wrote to Harrison in November instructing him to defer the military occupation of the ne-

* *State Papers, Indian Affairs*, p. 799.

† War Department Archives, MSS.

purchase on the Wabash, but giving no orders as to the policy intended to be taken by the government. Wanting peace, he threw on Harrison the responsibility for war.*

"It has indeed occurred to me," wrote the secretary, "that the surest means of securing good behavior from this conspicuous personage [Tecumthe] and his brother, would be to make them prisoners, but at this time more particularly, it is desirable that peace with all the Indian tribes should be preserved, and I am instructed by the President to express to your Excellency his expectation and confidence that in all your arrangements this may be considered (as I am confident it ever has been) a primary object with you."

CHAPTER V

Tippecanoe

Notwithstanding the hostile spirit on both sides, the winter of 1810-1811 passed without serious disturbance on the Wabash, and the summer of 1811 arrived before Harrison thought proper to take the next step. Then, June 24, he sent to Tecumthe and the Prophet a letter, or speech, intended to force an issue.

"Brothers," he wrote,† "this is the third year that all the white people in this country have been alarmed at your proceedings. You threaten us with war, you invite all the tribes to the north and west of us to join against us. Brothers, your warriors have lately been here to deny this, but I have received the information from every direction. The tribes on the Mississippi have sent me word that you intended to murder me, and then to commence a war upon our people. I have also received the speech that you sent to the Pottawatomies and others to join you for that purpose; but if I had no other evidence of your hostility to us, your seizing the salt which I lately sent up the Wabash is sufficient."

Except the seizure of five barrels of salt intended for other Indians, in June, 1811, no overt act yet showed the intention to begin a war, and certainly no such immediate intention existed; but two white men were at that moment murdered in the Illinois Territory, a drunken Indian was murdered at Vincennes, and these acts of violence, together with the general sense of insecurity, caused the government officials to write from all quarters to the War Department that Tecumthe must be suppressed. Tecumthe himself seemed disposed to avoid cause for attack. July 4 he

sent word that he would come to Vincennes, and to Harrison's alarm he appeared there, July 27, with two or three hundred warriors for an interview with the governor. The act proved courage, if not rashness. Harrison's instructions hinted advice to seize the two Indian leaders, if it could be done without producing a war, and Harrison had ample time to prepare his measures.

Tecumthe came and remained two days at Vincennes, explaining, with childlike candor, his plans and wishes. As soon as the council was over, he said, he should visit the Southern tribes to unite them with those of the North in a peaceful confederacy, and he hoped no attempt would be made to settle the disputed territory till his return in the spring. A great number of Indians were to come in the autumn to live at Tippecanoe, they must use the disputed region for hunting-ground. He wished everything to remain in its present situation till his return, he would then go and see the President and settle everything with him. The affairs of all the tribes in that quarter were in his own hands, and he would despatch messengers in every direction to prevent the Indians from doing further mischief.

Tecumthe seemed to think that his wish would prevent Harrison from further aggression for the time. A few days afterward he passed down the Wabash, with some twenty warriors, on his diplomatic errand to the Creeks, but before he was fairly out of sight, July 31, a number of citizens met at Vincennes, and adopted resolutions demanding that the settlement at Tippecanoe should be broken up. Immediate action, before Tecumthe should return, was urged by Harrison's party, and by many frightened settlers. Harrison's personal wish could not be doubted.

The Secretary of War had already ordered the Fourth Regiment of U. S. Infantry, under Colonel Boyd, with a company of riflemen,—making in the whole a force of five hundred regular troops,—to descend the Ohio from Pittsburg as rapidly as possible, and place themselves under Harrison's orders; but Eustis added instructions not easily followed or understood. July 17 he wrote to Harrison,—‡

"In case circumstances shall occur which may render it necessary or expedient to attack the Prophet and his followers, the force should be such as to insure the most complete success. This force will consist of the militia and

* Dawson, pp. 173, 174.

† Dawson's *Harrison*, p. 179.

‡ Dawson, p. 190.

regular troops. . . . If the Prophet should commence or seriously threaten hostilities, he ought to be attacked."

Under these instructions, Harrison was warranted in doing what he pleased. Not even Tecumthe denied the seriousness of his hostile threats, and Harrison had every reason to begin the war at once, if war must be; but although Eustis spoke his own mind clearly, he failed to reckon upon the President, and this neglect was the cause of another letter to Harrison, written three days later:—*

"Since my letter of the 17th instant, I have been particularly instructed by the President to communicate to your Excellency his earnest desire that peace may, if possible, be preserved with the Indians, and that to this end every proper means may be adopted. . . . Circumstances conspire at this particular juncture to render it peculiarly desirable that hostilities of any kind or to any degree, not indispensably required, should be avoided. The force under Colonel Boyd has been ordered to descend the Ohio, . . . and although the force is at the disposal of your Excellency, I am instructed to inform you that the President indulges the hope and expectation that your exertions and measures with the Indians will be such as may render their march to the Indian Territory unnecessary, and that they may remain liable to another disposition."

Without paying attention to the President's wishes emphatically expressed in these orders of July 20, Harrison passed the next month in raising forces for an expedition to satisfy the wishes of the Western people. No doubt was felt on the Ohio that Harrison meant to attack the Indians at Tippecanoe; and so serious a campaign was expected that Kentucky be-³⁰ came eager to share it. Among other Kentuckians, Joseph H. Daveiss, Aaron Burr's persecutor, wrote,† August 24, to Harrison, offering himself as a volunteer: "Under all the privacy of a letter," said he, "I make free to tell you that I have imagined there were two men in the West who had military talents; and you, sir, were the first of the two. It is thus an opportunity of service much valued by me." Daveiss doubted only whether the army was to attack at once, or to provoke attack.

Harrison accepted Daveiss's services, and gave him command of the dragoons, a mounted force of about one hundred and thirty men from Indiana and Kentucky. The Fourth U. S. Infantry, three hundred strong according to Colonel Boyd who commanded it,‡ arrived in the Territory at the beginning of Sep-

* Dawson, p. 191.

† Dawson, p. 200.

‡ Boyd to Eustis, Dec. 10, 1811; MSS. War Department Records.

tember. As rapidly as possible Harrison collected his forces, and sent them up the river to a point in the new purchase about sixty-five miles above Vincennes. The exact force was afterward much disputed.§ Harrison reported his effectives as a few more than nine hundred men. Some sixty Kentucky volunteers were of the number.

The last instructions from the Department, dated August 29,|| made no change in the tenor of the President's orders. When Harrison joined his army, October 6, at the camp above Vincennes, he wrote to Eustis,—¶

"I sincerely wish that my instructions were such as to authorize me to march up immediately to the Prophet's town. The troops which I command are a fine body of men, and the proportion of regulars, irregulars, infantry, and dragoons such as I could wish it. I have no reason to doubt the issue of a contest with the savages, and I am much deceived if the greater part of both officers and men are not desirous of coming in contact with them."

In doubt what to do next, Harrison waited while his army built a small wooden fort, to which he gave his own name, and which was intended to establish formal possession of the new purchase. While the army was engaged in this work, one of the sentinels was fired at and wounded in the night of October 10 by some person or persons unseen and unknown. Harrison regarded this as a beginning of hostilities by the Prophet, and decided to act as though war was declared. October 12 he received from Secretary Eustis a letter dated September 18, never published though often referred to,** which is not found in the records of the government. Harrison replied the next day:—††

"Your letter of the 18th ult. I had the honor to receive yesterday. My views have hitherto been limited to the erection of the fort which we are now building, and to a march, by way of feint, in the direction of the Prophet's town, as high, perhaps, as the Vermilion River. But the powers given me in your last letter, and circumstances which have occurred here at the very moment on which it was received, call for measures of a more energetic kind."

With this despatch Harrison enclosed a return of

§ Marshall's *Kentucky*, ii. 509.

|| Dawson, p. 195. Cf. McAfee, p. 18.

¶ Harrison to Eustis, Oct. 6, 1811; MSS. War Department Archives.

** Dawson, p. 253.

†† Harrison to Eustis, Oct. 13, 1811; MSS. War Department Archives.

the soldiers present under his command "You will observe," he said, "that our effectives are but little over nine hundred." The rank-and-file consisted of seven hundred and forty-two men fit for duty. Harrison thought this force too small, and sent back to Vincennes for four companies of mounted riflemen. Two of the four companies joined him,* but their strength was not reported. These returns showed that the army, with the two additional companies, numbered at least one thousand effectives. One of the officers of the Fourth U. S. Infantry, writing November 21, said that the force was a little upward of eleven hundred men †

While the Americans were determined not to return without a battle, the Indians had been strictly ordered by Tecumthe to keep the peace, and showed the intention to avoid Harrison's attack. As early as September 25, the Prophet sent a number of Indians to Vincennes to protest his peaceful intentions, and to promise that Harrison's demands should be complied with. ‡ Harrison returned no answer and sent no demands. October 28 he broke up his camp at Fort Harrison, and the army began its march up the river. The governor remained one day longer at the fort, and from there, October 29, sent some friendly Indians to the Prophet with a message requiring that the Winnebagoes, Pottawatomies, and Kickapoos, at Tippecanoe, should return to their tribes; that all stolen horses should be given up, and that murderers should be surrendered. He intended at a later time to add a demand for hostages,§ in case the Prophet should accede to these preliminary terms.

Harrison did not inform the friendly Indians where they would find him, or where they were to bring their answer. || Crossing to the west bank of the Wabash to avoid the woods, the troops marched over a level prairie to the mouth of the Vermilion River, where they erected a blockhouse to protect their boats. The Vermilion River was the extreme boundary of the recent land-cession, and to cross it, under such circumstances, was war. Harrison looked for resistance, but not an Indian was seen, and November 3 the army resumed its march, keeping in the

open country, until on the evening of November 5 it arrived, still unmolested, within eleven miles of the Prophet's town. From the Vermilion River to Tippecanoe was fifty miles.

The next morning, November 6, the army advanced toward the town, and as the column approached, Indians were frequently seen in front and on the flanks. Interpreters tried to parley with them, but they returned no answer except insulting or threatening gestures. Two miles from the town the army unexpectedly entered a difficult country, thick with wood and cut by deep ravines, where Harrison was greatly alarmed, seeing himself at the mercy of an attack, but no attack was made. When clear of the woods, within a mile and a half of the town, he halted his troops and declared his intention to encamp. Daveiss and all the other officers urged him to attack the town at once, but he replied that his instructions would not justify his attacking the Indians unless they refused his demands, and he still hoped to hear something in the course of the evening from the friendly Indians sent from Fort Harrison. Daveiss remonstrated, and every officer in the army supported him. Harrison then pleaded the danger of further advance. "The experience of the last two days," he said, ¶ "ought to convince every officer that no reliance ought to be placed upon the guides as to the topography of the country, that, relying on their information, the troops had been led into a situation so unfavorable that but for the celerity with which they changed their position a few Indians might have destroyed them, he was therefore determined not to advance to the town until he had previously reconnoitred."

The candor of this admission did not prove the military advantages of the halt, and neither of Harrison's reasons was strengthened by a third, which he gave a month afterward in a letter to the Governor of Kentucky. "The success of an attack upon the town by day," he said, ** "was very problematical. I expected that they would have met me the next day to hear my terms, but I did not believe that they would accede to them, and it was my determination to attack and burn the town the following night." Daveiss and the other officers, looking at the matter only as soldiers, became more urgent, until Harrison

* Harrison to Eustis, Nov. 2, 1811, MSS. War Department Archives.

† Letter in *New England Palladium*, Dec. 24, 1911.

‡ Dawson, p. 196.

§ Dawson, p. 196.

|| Speech of Captain Charley, July 10, 1814; *State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1. 830.

¶ Dawson, p. 206.

** Harrison to Governor Scott, Dec. 13, 1811; Dawson, p. 244.

at last yielded, and resolving no longer to hesitate in treating the Indians as enemies,* ordered an advance, with the determination to attack. "I yielded to what appeared the general wish," he said in his official report,† "and directed the troops to advance." They advanced about four hundred yards, when three Indians sent by the Prophet came to meet them, bringing a pacific message, and urging that hostilities should if possible be avoided. Harrison's conscience, already heavy-laden, again gave way at this en- 10 treaty.‡ "I answered that I had no intention of attacking them until I discovered that they would not comply with the demands that I had made; that I would go on and encamp at the Wabash, and in the morning would have an interview with the Prophet and his chiefs, and explain to them the determination of the President; that in the mean time no hostilities should be committed."

Had Harrison's vacillation been due to consciousness of strength, his officers would have had no just 20 reason for remonstrance; but he estimated his force at about eight hundred effective men, and the Indians at more than six hundred.§ He knew that no victory over the Northern Indians had ever been won where the numbers were anything like equal.|| Before him was an unknown wilderness; behind him was a line of retreat, one hundred and fifty miles long, and he had supplies for very few days. He could not trust the Indians; and certainly they could not trust him, for he meant in any case to surprise their town the next 30 night. Delay was dangerous only to the whites,—advantageous only to the Indians. Daveiss felt so strongly the governor's hesitation that he made no secret of his discontent, and said openly not only that the army ought to attack,¶ but also that it would be attacked before morning, or would march home with nothing accomplished.** Indeed, if Harrison had not come there to destroy the town, he had no sufficient military reason for being there at all.

Having decided to wait, Harrison had next to 40 choose a camping-ground. The army marched on, looking for some spot on the river where wood as well

as water could be obtained, until they came within one hundred and fifty yards of the town, when the Indians, becoming alarmed, called on them to stop. Harrison halted his men and asked the Indians to show him a place suitable for his purpose, which they did;†† and the troops fled off in front of the town, at right angles to the Wabash, till they reached a creek less than a mile to the northwest. Next to the town was a marshy prairie; beyond the marsh the ground rose about ten feet to a level covered with oaks; and then about a hundred yards farther it suddenly dropped to the creek behind, where the banks were thick with willow and brushwood. No spot in the neighborhood was better suited for a camp than this saddle-back between the marsh and the brook, but Harrison saw that it offered serious disadvantages. "I found the ground destined for the encampment," he reported, "not altogether such as I would wish it. It was, indeed, admirably calculated for regular troops that were opposed to regulars, but it afforded great facility to the approach of the savages."

There Harrison camped. The troops were stationed in a sort of triangle, following the shape of the high land,‡‡—the base toward the northeast, the blunt apex toward the southwest; but at no part of the line was any attempt made to intrench, or palisade, or in any way to cover the troops. Harrison afterward explained that he had barely axes enough to procure firewood. The want of axes had been discovered at Fort Harrison, and hardly excused the neglect to in- trench at Tippecanoc, for it had not prevented building the fort. The army pitched its tents and lighted its fires for the night, with no other protection than a single line of sentries, although the creek in the rear gave cover to an attack within a few yards of the camp.

The night was dark, with light rain at intervals; the troops slept on their arms, and their rest was disturbed by no sound. Many accounts have been given of what passed in the Prophet's town,§§ but none of them deserve attention. During the night neither Harrison nor his sentinels heard or saw anything that roused their suspicions. Harrison, in a brief report of the next day,¶¶ said that the first alarm was

* McAfee, p. 25. Dawson, p. 206.

† Harrison to Eustis, Nov. 18, 1811; *State Papers, Indian Affairs*, p. 776.

‡ Harrison to Eustis, Nov. 18, 1811; *State Papers, Indian Affairs*, p. 776.

§ Dawson, p. 216.

|| Dawson, pp. 216, 250.

¶ Dawson, p. 211.

** McAfee, p. 28.

†† Harrison to Eustis, Nov. 18, 1811; *State Papers, Indian Affairs*, p. 776.

‡‡ See Plan of Camp. Lossing, p. 205.

§§ Lossing, p. 203.

¶¶ Harrison to Eustis, Nov. 8, 1811; *National Intelligencer*, Nov. 30, 1811. Niles, i. 255.

given at half-past four o'clock in the morning. His full report of November 18 corrected the time to a few minutes before four. Still another account, on the day after the battle, named five o'clock as the moment * Harrison himself was about to leave his tent, before calling the men to parade, when a sentinel at the farthest angle of the camp above the creek fired a shot. In an instant the Indian yell was raised, and before the soldiers at that end of the camp could leave their tents, the Indians had pierced the line, and were shooting the men by the light of the camp-fires. Within a few moments, firing began along the whole line, until the camp, except for a space next the creek, was encircled by it. Fortunately for Harrison, the attacking party at the broken angle had not strength to follow up its advantage, and the American line was soon re-formed in the rear. Harrison rode to the point, and at the northeast angle met Daveiss and his dismounted dragoons. Daveiss reported that the Indians, under the cover of the trees, were annoying the troops severely, and asked leave to dislodge them. The order was given, and Daveiss, followed by only a few men, rushed forward among the trees, where he soon fell, mortally wounded. The troops, after forming, held their position without further disaster till daybreak, when they advanced and drove the Indians into the swamp. With this success the battle ended, having lasted two hours.

For the moment the army was saved, but only at great cost. Daveiss, who held an anomalous position almost as prominent as that of Harrison himself, died in the afternoon. Captain Baen, acting major of the Fourth Regiment, two lieutenants, and an ensign of the same regiment, were killed or wounded; two lieutenant-colonels, four captains, and several lieutenants of the Indiana militia were on the same list, and the general's aide-de-camp was killed. One hundred and fifty-four privates were returned among the casualties, fifty-two of whom were killed or mortally wounded. The total loss was one hundred and eighty-eight, of whom sixty-one were killed or mortally wounded †. The bodies of thirty-eight Indians were found on the field.

If the army had cause for anxiety before the battle, it had double reason for alarm when it realized its position on November 7. If Harrison's own account

was correct, he had with him only eight hundred men. Sixty-one had been killed or mortally wounded, and he had near a hundred and fifty wounded to carry with him in his retreat. His effective force was diminished more than one fourth, according to his biographer, ‡ his camp contained very little flour and no meat, for the few beeves brought with the army were either driven away by the Indians or stampeded by the noise of the battle, and his only base of supplies was at Vincennes, one hundred and seventy miles away. The Indians could return in greater numbers, but his own force must steadily grow weaker. Harrison was naturally a cautious man, he felt strongly the dangers that surrounded him, and his army felt them not less §.

The number of Indian warriors engaged in the night attack was estimated by Harrison at six hundred ||. The law of exaggeration, almost invariable in battle, warrants belief that not more than four hundred Indians were concerned in the attack. The Prophet's Indians were few. Tecumthe afterward spoke of the attack as an "unfortunate transaction that took place between the white people and a few of our young men at our village" ¶—as though it was an affair in which the young warriors had engaged against the will of the older chiefs. Tecumthe commonly told the truth, even with indiscretion, and nothing in the American account contradicted his version of the affair at Tippecanoe. Harrison's ablest military manoeuvre had been the availing himself of Tecumthe's over-confidence in quitting the country at so critical a moment.

Although Harrison did not venture to send out a scout for twenty-four hours, but remained in camp waiting attack, no further sign of hostilities was given. "Night," said one of the army, ** "found every man mounting guard, without food, fire, or light, and in a drizzling rain. The Indian dogs, during the dark hours, produced frequent alarms by prowling in search of carrion about the sentinels." On the morning of November 8, the dragoons and mounted riflemen approached the town and found it deserted. Apparently the Indians had fled in haste, leaving everything, even a few new English guns and powder. The army took what supplies were needed, and set

‡ Dawson, p. 233.

§ Dawson, p. 233. Lossing, p. 206, note.

|| Report of Nov. 18, 1811; Niles, 1. 304.

¶ Dawson, p. 267.

** Lossing, p. 206, note.

* William Taylor to —, Nov. 8, 1811, *National Intelligencer*, Dec. 7, 1811.

† General Return, *State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1. 779.

fire to the village. Meanwhile every preparation had been made for rapid retreat. The wagons could scarcely carry all the wounded, and Harrison abandoned the camp furniture and private baggage. "We managed, however, to bring off the public property," he reported. At noon of November 9 the train started, and by night-fall had passed the dangerous woods and broken country where a few enemies could have stopped it. No Indians appeared; the march was undisturbed; and after leaving a company of the U. S. 10 Fourth Regiment at Fort Harrison, the rest of the force arrived, November 18, at Vincennes.

The battle of Tippecanoe at once became a point of pride throughout the Western country, and Harrison received the official applause and thanks of Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois; but Harrison's account of his victory was not received without criticism, and the battle was fought again in the press and in private. The Fourth Regiment more than hinted that had it not been for their steadiness the 20 whole party would have been massacred. At Vincennes, Harrison was severely attacked. In Kentucky criticism was open, for the family and friends of Joseph Daveiss were old Federalists, who had no interest in the military triumphs of a Republican official. Humphrey Marshall, Daveiss's brother-in-law, published a sharp review of Harrison's report, and hinted plainly that Daveiss had fallen a victim to the General's blunders. With characteristic vigor of language, Marshall called Harrison "a little, selfish, 30 intriguing busybody," and charged him with having made the war without just cause, for personal objects.* These attacks caused the Western Republicans to sustain with the more ardor their faith in Harrison's military genius, and their enthusiasm for the victory of Tippecanoe; but President Madison and Secretary Eustis guarded themselves with some care from expressing an opinion on the subject.

Whatever his critics might say, Harrison gained 40 his object; and established himself in the West as the necessary leader of any future campaign. That result, as far as it was good, seemed to be the only advantage gained at Tippecanoe. Harrison believed that the battle had broken the Prophet's influence, and saved the frontier from further alarm; he thought that in the event of a British war, the Indians would remain neutral having "witnessed the inefficacy of

British assistance"; † he expected the tribes to seek peace as a consequence of what he considered the severest defeat they had ever received since their acquaintance with the white people; ‡ and the expectation was general that they would deliver the Prophet and Tecumthe into the hands of the American government. For a time these impressions seemed reasonable. The Prophet lost influence, and the peace was not further disturbed; but presently the Western people learned that the Prophet had returned to Tippecanoe, and that all things had resumed their old aspect, except that no one could foresee when the Indians would choose to retaliate for Harrison's invasion.

Toward January, Tecumthe returned from the South, and sent word that he was ready to go to Washington. March 1, 1812, a deputation of some eighty Indians visited Vincennes, and told Harrison that the whole winter had been passed in sending messages to the different villages to consult on their future course, and that all agreed to ask for peace. They blamed the Prophet for the affair at Tippecanoe, and asked leave to visit Washington to obtain peace from the President. Harrison gladly assented, for a delegation of Indians sent to Washington was a guaranty of peace during the time of their absence. He expected them to appear at Fort Wayne in April, ready for the journey.

The Indian hesitation was probably due to doubt whether war would take place between the United States and England. The whole influence of the British agents was exerted to unite the Indians and to arm them, but to prevent a premature outbreak. The British Indian agent at Amherstburg sent Tecumthe a message blaming the attack on Harrison. Tecumthe replied:—§

"You tell us to retreat or turn to one side should the Big Knives come against us. Had I been at home in the late unfortunate affair I should have done so; but those I left at home were (I cannot call them men) a poor set of people, and their scuffle with the Big Knives I compared to a struggle between little children who only scratch each other's faces. The Kickapoos, Winnebagoes have since been at Post Vincennes and settled the matter amicably."

The situation was well understood. "If we have a British war, we shall have an Indian war," wrote the

† Harrison to J. M. Scott, Dec. 2, 1811. Niles, i. 311.

‡ Harrison to Eustis, Dec. 4, 1811; *State Papers, Indian Affairs*, p. 779.

§ MSS. Canadian Archives. C. 676, p. 147.

* Marshall's *Kentucky*, ii. 507, 521.

commandant from Fort Wayne * "From the best information I can get, I have every reason to believe we shall have an Indian war this spring, whether we have a British war or not" Harrison must himself have felt that the campaign to Tippecanoe could only add to his dangers unless it was followed up. After April 1, 1812, illusions vanished, for Indian hostilities began all along the border April 6 two settlers were murdered within three miles of Fort Dearborn, at Chicago, several murders were committed near Fort Madison, above St. Louis, on the Mississippi, but the warning which spread wild alarm throughout Indiana was the murder of a whole family early in April within five miles of Vincennes, and April 14 that of a settler within a few miles of the Ohio River. Another murder a few weeks afterward, on the White River, completed the work of terror.

Then a general panic seized the people. The militia dared not turn out, for while they collected at one spot, the Indians might attack their isolated cabins. Even Vincennes was thought to be in danger, and the stream of fugitives passed through it as rapidly as possible on their way southward, until depopulation threatened the Territory † "Most of the citizens in this country," reported Harrison, May 6, ‡ "have abandoned their farms, and taken refuge in such temporary forts as they have been able to construct. Nothing can exhibit more distress than those wretched people crowded together in places almost destitute of every necessary accommodation." Misled by the previous peaceful reports, the Government had sent the Fourth Regiment to Detroit, not even a company of militia could be procured nearer than the falls of the Ohio, and Harrison called for help in vain.

Fortunately, Tecumthe was not yet ready for war.

* J. Rhea to Eustis, March 14, 1812; *State Papers, Indian Affairs*, p. 806.

† Dawson, p. 263.

‡ *State Papers, Indian Affairs*, p. 808.

Six weeks after the hostilities began he appeared at a grand council, May 16, at Massassinway on the Wabash, between Tippecanoe and Fort Wayne. His speech to the tribes assembled there was more temperate than ever §

"Governor Harrison made war on my people in my absence," he said. "It was the will of God that he should do so. We hope it will please God that the white people may let us live in peace, we will not disturb them, neither have we done it, except when they came to our village with the intention of destroying us. We are happy to state to our brothers present that the unfortunate transaction that took place between the white people and a few of our young men at our village has been settled between us and Governor Harrison, and I will further state, had I been at home there would have been no bloodshed at that time."

He added that the recent murders had been committed by Pottawatomies not under his control, and he offered no excuse for them.

"Should the bad acts of our brothers the Pottawatomies draw on us the ill-will of our white brothers, and they should come again and make an unprovoked attack on us at our village, we will die like men, but we will never strike the first blow. We defy a living creature to say we ever advised any one, directly or indirectly, to make war on our white brothers. It has constantly been our misfortune to have our views misrepresented to our white brethren. This has been done by pretended chiefs of the Pottawatomies and others that have been in the habit of selling land to the white people that did not belong to them."

This was the situation on the Wabash in May and June, 1812. Not only was Tecumthe unwilling to strike the first blow, but he would not even retaliate Harrison's invasion and seizure of the disputed territory. He waited for Congress to act, but every one knew that whenever Congress should declare war against England, war must also be waged with the Indians, and no one could doubt that after provoking the Indian war, Americans ought to be prepared to wage it with effect, and without complaint of its horrors.

1890

§ Dawson, p. 266.

*Buddha and Brahma*⁷

TO JOHN HAY

My dear John:

26 April 1895

Once La Farge and I, on our rambles, stopped for an hour to meditate under the sacred Bo-tree of Buddha in the ruined and deserted city of Anuradjapura in the jungle of Ceylon; and, then, resuming our course, we presently found ourselves on the quiet bosom of the Indian Ocean. Perhaps I was a little bored by the calm of the tropical sea, or perhaps it was the greater calm of Buddha that bored me. At all events I amused a tedious day or two by jotting down in a notebook the lines which you profess to want. They are yours. Do not let them go further.

Ever affectionately,

Henry Adams.

The Buddha, known to man by many names—
Siddhartha, Sakya Muni, Blessed One,—
Sat in the forest, as had been his wont
These many years since he attained perfection;
In silent thought, abstraction, purity,
His eyes fixed on the Lotus in his hand,
He meditated on the perfect Life,
While his disciples, sitting round him, waited
His words of teaching, every syllable
More and more precious as the Master gently
Warned them how near was come his day of
parting.

10

In silence, as the Master gave example,
They meditated on the Path and Law,
Till one, Malunka, looking up and speaking,
Said to the Buddha: "O Omniscient One,
Teach us, if such be in the Perfect Way,
Whether the World exists eternally."

The Buddha made no answer, and in silence
All the disciples bent their contemplation
On the perfection of the Eight-fold Way,
Until Malunka spoke again: "O Master,
What answer shall we offer the Brahman
Who asks us if our Master holds the World
To be, or not, Eternal?"

20

Still the Buddha sat
As though he heard not, contemplating
The pure white Lotus in his sacred hand,

Till a third time Malunka questioned him:

"Lord of the World, we know not what we ask;
We fear to teach what thou hast not made pure."

Then gently, still in silence, lost in thought, 30
The Buddha raised the Lotus in his hand,
His eyes bent downward, fixed upon the flower.
No more! A moment so he held it only,
Then his hand sank into its former rest.

Long the disciples pondered on the lesson.
Much they discussed its mystery and meaning,
Each finding something he could make his own,
Some hope or danger in the Noble Way,
Some guide or warning to the Perfect Life.
Among them sat the last of the disciples, 40
Listening and pondering, silently and still;
And when the scholars found no certain meaning
In Buddha's answer to Malunka's prayer,
The young man pondered: I will seek my father,
The wisest man of all men in the world,
And he with one word will reveal this secret,
And make me in an instant reach the light
Which these in many years have not attained
Though guided by the Buddha and the Law.

So the boy sought his father—an old man 50
Famous for human wisdom, subtle counsel,
Boldness in action, recklessness in war—
Gautama's friend, the Rajah of Mogadha.
No follower of Buddha, but a Brahman,
Devoted first to Vishnu, then to caste,
He made no sign of anger or remonstrance
When his son left him at Siddhartha's bidding
To take the vows of poverty and prayer—
If Vishnu willed it, let his will be done!

The Rajah sat at evening in his Palace, 60
Deep in the solitude of his own thought,
When silently the young man entering
Crouched at a distance, waiting till his father
Should give some sign of favor. Then he spoke:
"Father, you are wise! I come to ask you
A secret meaning none of us can read;
For, when Malunka three times asked the Master
Whether the world was or was not eternal,

⁷ From *Buddha and Brahma* by Henry Adams. Copyright 1915 by Yale University Press. Reprinted by permission of *The Yale Review*.

Siddartha for a moment lifted up
The Lotus, and kept silence "

The Rajah pondered long, with darkened
features,
As though in doubt increasing Then he said
"Reflect, my son! The Master had not meant
The last and deepest lesson to be learned
From any but himself—by any means
But silent thought, abstraction, purity,
The living spirit of his Eight-fold Way,
The jewels of his Lotus Least of all
Had he, whose first and easiest lesson taught
The nothingness of caste, intended you
To seek out me, a Warrior, Kshatriya,
Knowing no duties but to caste and sword,
To teach the Buddha and unveil his shrine.
My teaching is not his, mine not his way,
You quit your Master when you question me "

Silent they sat, and long Then slowly spoke
The younger "Father, you are wise.
I must have Wisdom " "Not so, my son
Old men are often fools, but young men always.
Your duty is to act, leave thought to us " 90
The younger sat in patience, eyes cast down,
Voice low and gentle as the Master taught,
But still repeated the same prayer "You are wise,
I must have wisdom. Life for me is thought,
But, were it action, how, in youth or age,
Can man act wisely, leaving thought aside?"

The Rajah made no answer, but almost
His mouth seemed curving to a sudden smile
That hardened to a frown, and then he spoke
"If Vishnu wills it, let his will be done! 100
The child sees jewels on his father's sword,
And cries until he gets it for a plaything
He cannot use it but to wound himself;
Its perfect workmanship wakes no delight,
Its jewels are for him but common glass,
The sword means nothing that the child can
know,
But when at last the child has grown to man,
Has learned the beauty of the weapon's art,
And proved its purpose on the necks of men,
Still must he tell himself, as I tell you: 110
Use it, but ask no questions! *Think not! Strike!*
This counsel you reject, for you want wisdom.

So be it! Yet I swear to you in truth
70 That all my wisdom lies in these three words
"You ask Gautama's meaning, for you know
That since his birth, his thoughts and acts alike
Have been to me a mirror, clearer far
Than to himself, for no man sees himself
With the solemnity of youth, you ask
Of me, on whom the charm of childhood still 120
Works greater miracles than magicians know,
To tell, as though it were a juggler's trick
The secret meaning which himself but now
Could tell you only by a mystic sign,
80 The symbol of a symbol—so far-thought,
So vague and vast and intricate its scope
And I, whom you compel to speak for him,
Must give his thought through mine, for his
Passes your powers—yours and all your school
"Your Master, Sakya Muni, Gautama, 130
Is, like myself and you, a Kshatriya,
And in our youths we both, like you, rebelled
Against the priesthood and their laws of caste
We sought new paths, desperate to find escape
Out of the jungle that the priests had made
Gautama found a path You follow it
I found none, and I stay here, in the jungle,
Content to tolerate what I cannot mend
I blame not him or you, but would you know 140
Gautama's meaning, you must fathom mine.
He failed to cope with life, renounced its cares,
Fled to the forest, and attained the End,
Reaching the End by sacrificing life
You know both End and Path You, too, attain.
I could not Ten years older, I,
Already trained to rule, to fight, to scheme,
100 To strive for objects that I dared not tell,
Not for myself alone, but for us all,
Had I thrown down my sword, and fled my
throne,
Not all the hermits, priests, and saints of Ind, 150
Buddhist or Brahman, could have saved our heads
From rolling in the dirt; for Rajahs know
A quicker than the Eight-fold Noble Way
To help their scholars to attain the End.
Renounce I could not, and could not reform.
How could I battle with the Brahman priests,
Or free the people from the yoke of caste,
When, with the utmost aid that priests could
give,

And willing service from each caste in turn,
I saved but barely both my throne and them.

"So came it that our paths were separate,
And his led up to so supreme a height
That from its summit he can now look down
And see where still the jungle stifles me.
Yet was our starting-point the same, and though
We now seem worlds apart—hold fast to this!—
The Starting-point must be the End-point too!
You know the Veda, and need not be taught
The first and last idea of all true knowledge:
One single spirit from which all things spring;
One thought containing all thoughts possible;
Not merely those that we, in our thin reason,
Hold to be true, but all their opposites;
For Brahma is Beginning, Middle, End,
Matter and Mind, Time, Space, Form, Life
and Death.

The Universal has no limit. Thought
Travelling in constant circles, round and round,
Must ever pass through endless contradictions,
Returning on itself at last, till lost
In silence.

"This is the Veda, as you know,
The alphabet of all philosophy,
For he who cannot or who dares not grasp
And follow this necessity of Brahma,
Is but a fool and weakling; and must perish
Among the follies of his own reflection.

"Your Master, you, and I, and all wise men,
Have one sole purpose which we never lose:
Through different paths we each seek to attain,
Sooner or later, as our paths allow,
A perfect union with the single Spirit.
Gautama's way is best, but all are good.
He breaks a path at once to what he seeks.
By silence and absorption he unites
His soul with the great soul from which it started.
But we, who cannot fly the world, must seek
To live two separate lives; one, in the world
Which we must ever seem to treat as real;
The other in ourselves, behind a veil
Not to be raised without disturbing both.

160 "The Rajah is an instrument of Brahma,
No more, no less, than sunshine, lightning, rain;
And when he meets resistance in his path,
And when his sword falls on a victim's neck,
It strikes as strikes the lightning—as it must;
Rending its way through darkness to the point
It needs must seek, by no choice of its own.
Thus in the life of Ruler, Warrior, Master,
The wise man knows his wisdom has no place,
And when most wise, we act by rule and law,
Talk to conceal our thought, and think 210
Only within the range of daily need,
170 Ruling our subjects while ourselves rebel,
Death always on our lips and in our act.

"This is the jungle in which we must stay,
According to the teachings of the Master,
Never can we attain the Perfect Life.
Yet in this world of selfishness and striving
The wise man lives as deeply sunk in silence,
As conscious of the Perfect Life he covets,
As any recluse in his forest shadows, 220
As any Yogi in his mystic trances.
We need no Noble Way to teach us Freedom
Amid the clamor of a world of slaves.
180 We need no Lotus to love purity
Where life is else corruption.

"So read Siddhartha's secret! He has taught
A certain pathway to attain the End;
And best and simplest yet devised by man,
Yet still so hard that every energy
Must be devoted to its sacred law. 230
Then, when Malunka turns to ask for knowledge,
Would seek what lies beyond the Path he teaches,
What distant horizon transcends his own,
He bids you look in silence on the Lotus.
190 For you, he means no more. For me, this meaning
Points back and forward to that common goal
From which all paths diverge; to which,
All paths must tend—Brahma, the only Truth!

"Gautama tells me my way too is good;
Life, Time, Space, Thought, the World, the
Universe 240
End where they first begin, in one sole Thought
Of Purity in Silence."

*Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres*⁸

GRACIOUS LADY —

Simple as when I asked your aid before,
Humble as when I prayed for grace in vain
Seven hundred years ago, weak, weary, sore
In heart and hope, I ask your help again

You, who remember all, remember me,
An English scholar of a Norman name,
I was a thousand who then crossed the sea
To wrangle in the Paris schools⁹ for fame

When your Byzantine portal¹⁰ was still young 10
I prayed there with my master Abailard,¹¹
When Ave Maris Stella¹² was first sung,
I helped to sing it here with Saint Bernard¹³

When Blanche¹⁴ set up your gorgeous Rose of
France¹⁵
I stood among the servants of the Queen,
And when Saint Louis¹⁶ made his penitence,
I followed barefoot where the King had been.

For centuries I brought you all my cares,
And vexed you with the murmurs of a child;
You heard the tedious burden of my prayers; 20
You could not grant them, but at least you
smiled

⁸From *Letters to a Niece and Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres* by Henry Adams. Copyright by Mabel La Farge. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company.

This poem was found in "a little wallet of special papers" after the death of Henry Adams. The niece says that the poem was apparently written "just after the *Chartres* book and while he was contemplating the *Education*." She adds. "In this 'Prayer' Henry Adams makes an act of faith in the Son's divinity."

⁹Schools were established under the successors of Charlemagne

¹⁰The Byzantine influence in the architecture of the cathedral at Chartres is seen in the west front, with three portals, with a sculptured Christ over the central door, the ascension over the left door, and the seated Virgin on the left

¹¹Pierre Abélard (1079-1142), French scholar who represented the spirit of free inquiry in theology; twice cited for heresy but pardoned

¹²Chant sung to the Virgin

¹³Saint Bernard (1091-1153), celebrated French ecclesiastic, according to legend a special favorite of the Virgin

¹⁴Blanche of Castile (1187-1252), Queen of France, wife of Louis VIII and mother of Louis IX

¹⁵An enormous rose window, forty-four feet in diameter, on the north side of the apse of the Chartres cathedral, built under the patronage of Queen Blanche

¹⁶Louis IX of France (1215-1270), went on two crusades, canonized in 1297.

If then I left you, it was not my crime,
Or if a crime, it was not mine alone
All children wander with the truant Time
Pardon me too! You pardoned once your Son!

For He said to you — "Wist ye not that I
Must be about my Father's business?"¹⁷ So,
Seeking his Father he pursued his way
Straight to the Cross towards which we all
must go.

So I too wandered off among the host
That racked the earth to find the father's clue. 30
I did not find the Father, but I lost
What now I value more, the Mother,—You!

I thought the fault was yours that foiled my
search,
I turned and broke your image on its throne,
Cast down my idol, and resumed my march
To claim the father's empire for my own

Crossing the hostile sea, our greedy band
Saw rising hills and forests in the blue,
Our father's kingdom in the promised land! 40
—We seized it, and dethroned the father too.

And now we are the Father, with our blood,
Ruling the Infinite, not Three but One,
We made our world and saw that it was good;
Ourselves we worship, and we have no Son.

Yet we have Gods, for even our strong nerve
Falters before the Energy we own
Which shall be master? Which of us shall serve?
Which wears the fetters? Which shall bear
the crown?

Brave though we be, we dread to face the Sphinx, 50
Or answer the old riddle she still asks
Strong as we are, our reckless courage shrinks
To look beyond the piece-work of our tasks

But when we must, we pray, as in the past
Before the Cross on which your Son was nailed
Listen, dear lady! You shall hear the last
Of the strange prayers Humanity has wailed.

¹⁷Luke 11 49.

Prayer to the Dynamo

MYSTERIOUS POWER! Gentle Friend!

Despotic Master! Tireless Force!

You and We are near the End,

Either You or We must bend

To bear the martyr's Cross.

We know ourselves, what we can bear

As men; our strength and weakness too;

Down to the fraction of a hair;

And know that we, with all our care

And knowledge, know not you.

You come in silence, Primal Force,

We know not whence, or when, or why;

You stay a moment in your course

To play; and, lo! you leap across

To Alpha Centauri!¹⁸

We know not whether you are kind,

Or cruel in your fiercer mood;

But be you Matter, be you Mind,

We think we know that you are blind,

And we alone are good.

We know that prayer is thrown away,

For you are only force and light;

A shifting current; night and day;

We know this well, and yet we pray,

For prayer is infinite.

Like you! Within the finite sphere

That bounds the impotence of thought,

We search an outlet everywhere

But only find that we are here

And that you are—are not!

What are we then? the lords of space?

The master-mind whose tasks you do?

Jockey who rides you in the race?

Or are we atoms whirled apace,

Shaped and controlled by you?

Still silence! Still no end in sight!

No sound in answer to our cry!

Then, by the God we now hold tight,

Though we destroy soul, life and light,

Answer you shall—or die!

We are no beggars! What care we

For hopes or terrors, love or hate?

¹⁸ Nearest known star of the southern constellation *Centaurus*.

What for the universe? We see

Only our certain destiny

And the last word of Fate.

Seize, then, the Atom! rack his joints!

Tear out of him his secret spring!

Grind him to nothing!—though he points

To us, and his life-blood anoints

Me—the dead Atom-King!

A curious prayer, dear lady! is it not?

Strangely unlike the prayers I prayed to you!

Stranger because you find me at this spot,

Here, at your feet, asking your help anew.

Strangest of all, that I have ceased to strive,

Ceased even care what new coin fate shall
strike.

In truth it does not matter. Fate will give

Some answer; and all answers are alike.

So, while we slowly rack and torture death

And wait for what the final void will show,

Waiting I feel the energy of faith

Not in the future science, but in you!

The man who solves the Infinite, and needs

The force of solar systems for his play,

Will not need me, nor greatly care what deeds

Made me illustrious in the dawn of day.

He will send me, dethroned, to claim my rights,

Fossil survival of an age of stone,

Among the cave-men and the troglodytes

Who carved the mammoth on the mammoth's
bone.

He will forget my thought, my acts, my fame,

As we forget the shadows of the dusk,

Or catalogue the echo of a name

As we the scratches on the mammoth's tusk.

But when, like me, he too has trod the track

Which leads him up to power above control,

He too will have no choice but wander back

And sink in helpless hopelessness of soul,

Before your majesty of grace and love,

The purity, the beauty and the faith;

The depth of tenderness beneath; above,

The glory of the life and of the death.

100

110

120

130

When your Byzantine portal still was young, 140
 I came here with my master Abailard,
 When Ave Maria Stella was first sung,
 I joined to sing it here with Saint Bernard

When Blanche set up your glorious Rose of
 France,
 In scholar's robes I waited on the Queen,
 When good Saint Louis did his penitence,
 My prayer was deep like his my faith as keen

What loftier prize seven hundred years shall
 bring,
 What deadlier struggles for a larger air,
 What immortality our strength shall wring 150
 From Time and Space, we may—or may
 not—care,

But years, or ages, or eternity,
 Will find me still in thought before your
 throne,
 Pondering the mystery of Maternity,
 Soul within Soul,—Mother and Child in One!

Help me to see! not with my mimic sight—
 With yours! which carried radiance, like the
 sun,
 Giving the rays you saw with—light in light—
 Tying all suns and stars and worlds in one.

Help me to know! not with my mocking art— 160
 With you who knew yourself unbound by laws,
 Gave God your strength, your life, your sight,
 your heart.
 And took from him the Thought that Is—the
 Cause

Help me to feel! not with my insect sense,—
 With yours that felt all life alive in you;
 Infinite heart beating at your expense,
 Infinite passion breathing the breath you
 drew!

Help me to bear! not my own baby load,
 But yours, who bore the failure of the light,
 The strength, the knowledge and the thought of
 God,— 170
 The futile folly of the Infinite!
 1895? 1920

FROM

*The Education of Henry Adams*¹⁹

CHAPTER I

Quincy (1838–1848)

Under the shadow of Boston State House, turning
 its back on the house of John Hancock, the little
 passage called Hancock Avenue runs, or ran, from
 Beacon Street, skirting the State House grounds, to
 Mount Vernon Street, on the summit of Beacon Hill,
 and there, in the third house below Mount Vernon
 Place, February 16, 1838, a child was born, and 10
 christened later by his uncle, the minister of the
 First Church after the tenets of Boston Unitarianism,
 as Henry Brooks Adams

Had he been born in Jerusalem under the shadow
 of the Temple and circumcised in the Synagogue by
 his uncle the high priest, under the name of Israel

¹⁹ From *The Education of Henry Adams* by Henry Adams
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 1907.

Cohen, he would scarcely have been more distinctly
 branded, and not much more heavily handicapped
 in the races of the coming century, in running for
 such stakes as the century was to offer, but, on the
 other hand, the ordinary traveller, who does not enter
 the field of racing, finds advantage in being, so to
 speak, ticketed through life, with the safeguards of
 an old, established traffic. Safeguards are often irk-
 some, but sometimes convenient, and if one needs
 them at all, one is apt to need them badly. A hundred
 years earlier, such safeguards as his would have secured
 any young man's success; and although in 1838 their
 value was not very great compared with what they
 would have had in 1738, yet the mere accident of
 starting a twentieth-century career from a nest of
 associations so colonial—so troglodytic—as the First
 Church, the Boston State House, Beacon Hill, John
 Hancock and John Adams, Mount Vernon Street and
 Quincy, all crowding on ten pounds of unconscious
 20 babyhood, was so queer as to offer a subject of curi-

ous speculation to the baby long after he had witnessed the solution. What could become of such a child of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when he should wake up to find himself required to play the game of the twentieth? Had he been consulted, would he have cared to play the game at all, holding such cards as he held, and suspecting that the game was to be one of which neither he nor any one else back to the beginning of time knew the rules or the risks or the stakes? He was not consulted and was not responsible, but had he been taken into the confidence of his parents, he would certainly have told them to change nothing as far as concerned him. He would have been astounded by his own luck. Probably no child, born in the year, held better cards than he. Whether life was an honest game of chance, or whether the cards were marked and forced, he could not refuse to play his excellent hand. He could never make the usual plea of irresponsibility. He accepted the situation as though he had been a party to it, and under the same circumstances would do it again, the more readily for knowing the exact values. To his life as a whole he was a consenting, contracting party and partner from the moment he was born to the moment he died. Only with that understanding—as a consciously assenting member in full partnership with the society of his age—had his education an interest to himself or to others.

As it happened, he never got to the point of playing the game at all; he lost himself in the study of it, watching the errors of the players; but this is the only interest in the story, which otherwise has no moral and little incident. A story of education—seventy years of it—the practical value remains to the end in doubt, like other values about which men have disputed since the birth of Cain and Abel; but the practical value of the universe has never been stated in dollars. Although every one cannot be a Gargantua²⁰—Napolcon-Bismarck and walk off with the great bells of Notre Dame, every one must bear his own universe, and most persons are moderately interested in learning how their neighbors have managed to carry theirs.

This problem of education, started in 1838, went on for three years, while the baby grew, like other babies, unconsciously, as a vegetable, the outside world working as it never had worked before, to get

his new universe ready for him. Often in old age he puzzled over the question whether, on the doctrine of chances, he was at liberty to accept himself or his world as an accident. No such accident had ever happened before in human experience. For him, alone, the old universe was thrown into the ash-heap and a new one created. He and his eighteenth-century, troglodytic Boston were suddenly cut apart—separated forever—in act if not in sentiment, by the opening of the Boston and Albany Railroad; the appearance of the first Cunard steamers in the bay; and the telegraphic messages which carried from Baltimore to Washington the news that Henry Clay and James K. Polk were nominated for the Presidency. This was in May, 1844; he was six years old; his new world was ready for use, and only fragments of the old met his eyes.

Of all this that was being done to complicate his education, he knew only the color of yellow. He first found himself sitting on a yellow kitchen floor in strong sunlight. He was three years old when he took this earliest step in education; a lesson of color. The second followed soon; a lesson of taste. On December 3, 1841, he developed scarlet fever. For several days he was as good as dead, reviving only under the careful nursing of his family. When he began to recover strength, about January 1, 1842, his hunger must have been stronger than any other pleasure or pain, for while in after life he retained not the faintest recollection of his illness, he remembered quite clearly his aunt entering the sick-room bearing in her hand a saucer with a baked apple.

The order of impressions retained by memory might naturally be that of color and taste, although one would rather suppose that the sense of pain would be first to educate. In fact, the third recollection of the child was that of discomfort. The moment he could be removed, he was bundled up in blankets and carried from the little house in Hancock Avenue to a larger one which his parents were to occupy for the rest of their lives in the neighboring Mount Vernon Street. The season was midwinter, January 10, 1842, and he never forgot his acute distress for want of air under his blankets, or the noises of moving furniture.

As a means of variation from a normal type, sickness in childhood ought to have a certain value not to be classed under any fitness or unfitness of natural selection; and especially scarlet fever affected boys

²⁰ Giant character in Rabelais' *Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel*, a coarse satire.

seriously, both physically and in character, though they might through life puzzle themselves to decide whether it had fitted or unfitted them for success, but this fever of Henry Adams took greater and greater importance in his eyes, from the point of view of education, the longer he lived. At first, the effect was physical. He fell behind his brothers two or three inches in height, and proportionally in bone and weight. His character and processes of mind seemed to share in this fining-down process of scale. He was not good in a fight, and his nerves were more delicate than boys' nerves ought to be. He exaggerated these weaknesses as he grew older. The habit of doubt, of distrusting his own judgment and of totally rejecting the judgment of the world, the tendency to regard every question as open, the hesitation to act except as a choice of evils, the shirking of responsibility, the love of line, form, quality, the horror of ennui, the passion for companionship and the antipathy to society—all these are well-known qualities of New England character in no way peculiar to individuals but in this instance they seemed to be stimulated by the fever, and Henry Adams could never make up his mind whether, on the whole, the change of character was morbid or healthy, good or bad for his purpose. His brothers were the type, he was the variation.

As far as the boy knew, the sickness did not affect him at all, and he grew up in excellent health, bodily and mental, taking life as it was given, accepting its local standards without a difficulty, and enjoying so much of it as keenly as any other boy of his age. He seemed to himself quite normal, and his companions seemed always to think him so. Whatever was peculiar about him was education, not character, and came to him, directly and indirectly, as the result of that eighteenth-century inheritance which he took with his name.

The atmosphere of education in which he lived was colonial, revolutionary, almost Cromwellian, as though he were steeped, from his greatest grandmother's birth, in the odor of political crime. Resistance to something was the law of New England nature, the boy looked out on the world with the instinct of resistance; for numberless generations his predecessors had viewed the world chiefly as a thing to be reformed, filled with evil forces to be abolished, and they saw no reason to suppose that they had wholly succeeded in the abolition; the duty was unchanged. That duty implied not only resistance to

evil, but hatred of it. Boys naturally look on all force as an enemy, and generally find it so, but the New Englander, whether boy or man, in his long struggle with a stingy or hostile universe, had learned also to love the pleasure of hating, his joys were few.

Politics, as a practice, whatever its professions, had always been the systematic organization of hatreds, and Massachusetts politics had been as harsh as the climate. The chief charm of New England was harshness of contrasts and extremes of sensibility—a cold that froze the blood, and a heat that boiled it—so that the pleasure of hating—one's self if no better victim offered—was not its rarest amusement, but the charm was a true and natural child of the soil, not a cultivated weed of the ancients. The violence of the contrast was real and made the strongest motive of education. The double exterior nature gave life its relative values. Winter and summer, cold and heat, town and country, force and freedom, marked two modes of life and thought, balanced like lobes of the brain. Town was winter: confinement, school, rule, discipline, straight, gloomy streets, piled with six feet of snow in the middle, frosts that made the snow sing under wheels or runners, thaws when the streets became dangerous to cross; society of uncles, aunts, and cousins who expected children to behave themselves, and who were not always gratified, above all else, winter represented the desire to escape and go free. Town was restraint, law, unity. Country, only seven miles away, was liberty, diversity, outlawry, the endless delight of mere sense impressions given by nature for nothing, and breathed by boys without knowing it.

Boys are wild animals, rich in the treasures of sense, but the New England boy had a wider range of emotions than boys of more equable climates. He felt his nature crudely, as it was meant. To the boy Henry Adams, summer was drunken. Among senses, smell was the strongest—smell of hot pine-woods and sweet-fern in the scorching summer noon, of new-mown hay, of ploughed earth, of box hedges; of peaches, lilacs, syringas; of stables, barns, cow-yards, of salt water and low tide on the marshes, nothing came amiss. Next to smell came taste, and the children knew the taste of everything they saw or touched, from pennyroyal and flagroot to the shell of a pignut and the letters of a spelling-book—the taste of A-B, AB, suddenly revived on the boy's tongue sixty years afterwards. Light, line, and color as sensual

pleasures, came later and were as crude as the rest. The New England light is glare, and the atmosphere harshens color. The boy was a full man before he ever knew what was meant by atmosphere; his idea of pleasure in light was the blaze of a New England sun. His idea of color was a peony, with the dew of early morning on its petals. The intense blue of the sea, as he saw it a mile or two away, from the Quincy hills; the cumuli in a June afternoon sky; the strong reds and greens and purples of colored prints and children's picture-books, as the American colors then ran; these were ideals. The opposites or antipathies, were the cold grays of November evenings, and the thick, muddy thaws of Boston winter. With such standards, the Bostonian could not but develop a double nature. Life was a double thing. After a January blizzard, the boy who could look with pleasure into the violent snow-glare of the cold white sunshine, with its intense light and shade, scarcely knew what was meant by tone. He could reach it 20 only by education.

Winter and summer, then, were two hostile lives, and bred two separate natures. Winter was always the effort to live; summer was tropical license. Whether the children rolled in the grass, or waded in the brook, or swam in the salt ocean, or sailed in the bay, or fished for smelts in the creeks, or netted minnows in the salt-marshes, or took to the pine-woods and the granite quarries, or chased muskrats and hunted snapping-turtles in the swamps, or mush-rooms or nuts on the autumn hills, summer and 30 country were always sensual living, while winter was always compulsory learning. Summer was the multiplicity of nature; winter was school.

The bearing of the two seasons on the education of Henry Adams was no fancy; it was the most decisive force he ever knew; it ran through life, and made the division between its perplexing, warring, irreconcilable problems, irreducible opposites, with growing emphasis to the last year of study. From 40 earliest childhood the boy was accustomed to feel that, for him, life was double. Winter and summer, town and country, law and liberty, were hostile, and the man who pretended they were not, was in his eyes a schoolmaster—that is, a man employed to tell lies to little boys. Though Quincy was but two hours' walk from Beacon Hill, it belonged in a different world. For two hundred years, every Adams, from father to son, had lived within sight of State Street,

and sometimes had lived in it, yet none had ever taken kindly to the town, or been taken kindly by it. The boy inherited his double nature. He knew as yet nothing about his great-grandfather, who had died a dozen years before his own birth: he took for granted that any great-grandfather of his must have always been good, and his enemies wicked; but he divined his great-grandfather's character from his own. Never for a moment did he connect the two ideas of Boston and John Adams; they were separate and antagonistic; the idea of John Adams went with Quincy. He knew his grandfather John Quincy Adams only as an old man of seventy-five or eighty who was friendly and gentle with him, but except that he heard his grandfather always called "the President," and his grandmother "the Madam," he had no reason to suppose that his Adams grandfather differed in character from his Brooks grandfather who was equally kind and benevolent. He liked the Adams side best, but for no other reason than that it reminded him of the country, the summer, and the absence of restraint. Yet he felt also that Quincy was in a way inferior to Boston, and that socially Boston looked down on Quincy. The reason was clear enough even to a five-year-old child. Quincy had no Boston style. Little enough style had either; a simpler manner of life and thought could hardly exist, short of cave-dwelling. The flint-and-steel with which his grandfather Adams used to light his own fires in the early morning was still on the mantelpiece of his study. The idea of a livery or even a dress for servants, or of an evening toilette, was next to blasphemy. Bathrooms, water-supplies, lighting, heating, and the whole array of domestic comforts were unknown at Quincy. Boston had already a bathroom, a water-supply, a furnace, and gas. The superiority of Boston was evident, but a child liked it no better for that.

The magnificence of his grandfather Brooks's house in Pearl Street or South Street has long ago disappeared, but perhaps his country house at Medford may still remain to show what impressed the mind of a boy in 1845 with the idea of city splendor. The President's place at Quincy was the larger and older and far the more interesting of the two; but a boy felt at once its inferiority in fashion. It showed plainly enough its want of wealth. It smacked of colonial age, but not of Boston style or plush curtains. To the end of his life he never quite overcame the prejudice thus drawn in with his childish breath. He never

could compel himself to care for nineteenth-century style. He was never able to adopt it, any more than his father or grandfather or great-grandfather had done. Not that he felt it as particularly hostile, for he reconciled himself to much that was worse, but because, for some remote reason, he was born an eighteenth-century child. The old house at Quincy was eighteenth century. What style it had was in its Queen Anne mahogany panels and its Louis Seize chairs and sofas. The panels belonged to an old colonial Vassall who built the house, the furniture had been brought back from Paris in 1789 or 1801 or 1817, along with porcelain and books and much else of old diplomatic remnants, and neither of the two eighteenth-century styles—neither English Queen Anne nor French Louis Seize—was comfortable for a boy, or for any one else. The dark mahogany had been painted white to suit daily life in winter gloom. Nothing seemed to favor, for a child's objects, the older forms. On the contrary, most boys, as well as grown-up people, preferred the new, with good reason, and the child felt himself distinctly at a disadvantage for the taste.

Nor had personal preference any share in his bias. The Brooks grandfather was as amiable and as sympathetic as the Adams grandfather. Both were born in 1767, and both died in 1848. Both were kind to children, and both belonged rather to the eighteenth than to the nineteenth centuries. The child knew no difference between them except that one was associated with winter and the other with summer, one with Boston, the other with Quincy. Even with Medford, the association was hardly easier. Once as a very young boy he was taken to pass a few days with his grandfather Brooks under charge of his aunt, but became so violently homesick that within twenty-four hours he was brought back in disgrace. Yet he could not remember ever being seriously homesick again.

The attachment to Quincy was not altogether sentimental or wholly sympathetic. Quincy was not a bed of thornless roses. Even there the curse of Cain set its mark.²¹ There as elsewhere a cruel universe combined to crush a child. As though three or four vigorous brothers and sisters, with the best will, were not enough to crush any child, every one else conspired towards an education which he hated. From cradle to grave this problem of running order through

chaos, direction through space, discipline through freedom, unity through multiplicity, has always been, and must always be, the task of education, as it is the moral of religion, philosophy, science, art, politics, and economy, but a boy's will is his life, and he dies when it is broken, as the colt dies in harness, taking a new nature in becoming tame. Rarely has the boy felt kindly towards his tamers. Between him and his master has always been war. Henry Adams never knew a boy of his generation to like a master, and the task of remaining on friendly terms with one's own family, in such a relation, was never easy.

All the more singular it seemed afterwards to him that his first serious contact with the President should have been a struggle of will, in which the old man almost necessarily defeated the boy, but instead of leaving, as usual in such defeats, a lifelong sting, left rather an impression of as fair treatment as could be expected from a natural enemy. The boy met seldom with such restraint. He could not have been much more than six years old at the time—seven at the utmost—and his mother had taken him to Quincy for a long stay with the President during the summer. What became of the rest of the family he quite forgot, but he distinctly remembered standing at the house door one summer morning in a passionate outburst of rebellion against going to school. Naturally his mother was the immediate victim of his rage; that is what mothers are for, and boys also, but in this case the boy had his mother at unfair disadvantage, for she was a guest, and had no means of enforcing obedience. Henry showed a certain tactical ability by refusing to start, and he met all efforts at compulsion by successful, though too vehement protest. He was in fair way to win, and was holding his own, with sufficient energy, at the bottom of the long staircase which led up to the door of the President's library, when the door opened, and the old man slowly came down. Putting on his hat, he took the boy's hand without a word, and walked with him, paralyzed by awe up the road to the town. After the first moments of consternation at this interference in a domestic dispute, the boy reflected that an old gentleman close on eighty would never trouble himself to walk near a mile on a hot summer morning over a shadeless road to take a boy to school, and that it would be strange if a lad imbued with the passion of freedom could not find a corner to dodge around, somewhere before reaching the school door.

²¹ Cf. Genesis 14 12-15

Then and always, the boy insisted that this reasoning justified his apparent submission; but the old man did not stop, and the boy saw all his strategical points turned, one after another, until he found himself seated inside the school, and obviously the centre of curious if not malevolent criticism. Not till then did the President release his hand and depart.

The point was that this act, contrary to the inalienable rights of boys, and nullifying the social compact, ought to have made him dislike his grandfather for life. He could not recall that it had this effect even for a moment. With a certain maturity of mind, the child must have recognized that the President, though a tool of tyranny, had done his disreputable work with a certain intelligence. He had shown no temper, no irritation, no personal feeling, and had made no display of force. Above all, he had held his tongue. During their long walk he had said nothing; he had uttered no syllable of revolting cant about the duty of obedience and the wickedness of resistance to law; he had shown no concern in the matter; hardly even a consciousness of the boy's existence. Probably his mind at that moment was actually troubling itself little about his grandson's iniquities, and much about the iniquities of President Polk, but the boy could scarcely at that age feel the whole satisfaction of thinking that President Polk was to be the vicarious victim of his own sins, and he gave his grandfather credit for intelligent silence. For this forbearance he felt instinctive respect. He admitted force as a form of right; he admitted even temper, under protest; but the seeds of a moral education would at that moment have fallen on the stoniest soil in Quincy, which is, as every one knows, the stoniest glacial and tidal drift known in any Puritan land.

Neither party to this momentary disagreement can have felt rancor, for during these three or four summers the old President's relations with the boy were friendly and almost intimate. Whether his older brothers and sisters were still more favored he failed to remember, but he was himself admitted to a sort of familiarity which, when in his turn he had reached old age, rather shocked him, for it must have sometimes tried the President's patience. He hung about the library; handled the books; deranged the papers; ransacked the drawers; searched the old purses and pocket-books for foreign coins; drew the sword-cane; snapped the travelling-pistols; upset everything in the

corners, and penetrated the President's dressing-closet where a row of tumblers, inverted on the shelf, covered caterpillars which were supposed to become moths or butterflies, but never did. The Madam bore with fortitude the loss of the tumblers which her husband purloined for these hatcheries; but she made protest when he carried off her best cut-glass bowls to plant with acorns or peachstones that he might see the roots grow, but which, she said, he commonly forgot like the caterpillars.

At that time the President rode the hobby of tree-culture, and some fine old trees should still remain to witness it, unless they have been improved off the ground; but his was a restless mind, and although he took his hobbies seriously and would have been annoyed had his grandchild asked whether he was bored like an English duke, he probably cared more for the processes than for the results, so that his grandson was saddened by the sight and smell of peaches and pears, the best of their kind, which he brought up from the garden to rot on his shelves for seed. With the inherited virtues of his Puritan ancestors, the little boy Henry conscientiously brought up to him in his study the finest peaches he found in the garden, and ate only the less perfect. Naturally he ate more by way of compensation, but the act showed that he bore no grudge. As for his grandfather, it is even possible that he may have felt a certain self-reproach for his temporary rôle of schoolmaster—seeing that his own career did not offer proof of the worldly advantages of docile obedience—for there still exists somewhere a little volume of critically edited Nursery Rhymes with the boy's name in full written in the President's trembling hand on the fly-leaf. Of course there was also the Bible, given to each child at birth, with the proper inscription in the President's hand on the fly-leaf; while their grandfather Brooks supplied the silver mugs.

So many Bibles and silver mugs had to be supplied, that a new house, or cottage, was built to hold them. It was "on the hill," five minutes' walk above "the old house," with a far view eastward over Quincy Bay, and northward over Boston. Till his twelfth year, the child passed his summers there, and his pleasures of childhood mostly centered in it. Of education he had as yet little to complain. Country schools were not very serious. Nothing stuck to the mind except home impressions, and the sharpest were those of kindred children; but as influences that

warped a mind, none compared with the mere effect of the back of the President's bald head, as he sat in his pew on Sundays, in line with that of President Quincy, who, though some ten years younger, seemed to children about the same age. Before railways entered the New England town, every parish church showed half-a-dozen of these leading citizens, with gray hair, who sat on the main aisle in the best pews, and had sat there, or in some equivalent dignity, since the time of St. Augustine,²² if not since the glacial epoch. It was unusual for boys to sit behind a President grandfather, and to read over his head the tablet in memory of a President great-grandfather, who had "pledged his life, his fortune, and his sacred honor" to secure the independence of his country and so forth, but boys naturally supposed, without much reasoning, that other boys had the equivalent of President grandfathers, and that churches would always go on, with the bald-headed leading citizens on the main aisle, and Presidents or their equivalents 20 on the walls. The Irish gardener once said to the child. "You'll be thinkin' you'll be President too!" The casualty of the remark made so strong an impression on his mind that he never forgot it. He could not remember ever to have thought on the subject, to him, that there should be a doubt of his being President was a new idea. What had been would continue to be. He doubted neither about Presidents nor about Churches, and no one suggested at that time a doubt whether a system of society which 30 had lasted since Adam would outlast one Adams more.

The Madam was a little more remote than the President, but more decorative. She stayed much in her own room with the Dutch tiles, looking out on her garden with the box walks, and seemed a fragile creature to a boy who sometimes brought her a note or a message, and took distinct pleasure in looking at her delicate face under what seemed to him very becoming caps. He liked her refined figure, her gentle 40 voice and manner; her vague effect of not belonging there, but to Washington or to Europe, like her furniture, and writing-desk with little glass doors above and little eighteenth-century volumes in old binding, labelled, "Peregrine Pickle" or "Tom Jones" or "Hannah More." Try as she might, the Madam could never be Bostonian, and it was her cross in life, but to the boy it was her charm. Even at that age, he felt

drawn to it. The Madam's life had been in truth far from Boston. She was born in London in 1775, daughter of Joshua Johnson, an American merchant, brother of Governor Thomas Johnson of Maryland, and Catherine Nuth, of an English family in London. Driven from England by the Revolutionary War, Joshua Johnson took his family to Nantes, where they remained till the peace. The girl Louisa Catherine was nearly ten years old when brought back to London, and her sense of nationality must have been confused, but the influence of the Johnsons and the services of Joshua obtained for him from President Washington the appointment of Consul in London on the organization of the Government in 1790. In 1794 President Washington appointed John Quincy Adams Minister to The Hague. He was twenty-seven years old when he returned to London, and found the Consul's house a very agreeable haunt. Louisa was then twenty.

At that time, and long afterwards, the Consul's house, far more than the Minister's, was the centre of contact for travelling Americans, either official or other. The Legation was a shifting point, between 1785 and 1815, but the Consulate, far down in the City, near the Tower, was convenient and inviting, so inviting that it proved fatal to young Adams. Louisa was charming, like a Romney portrait, but among her many charms that of being a New England woman was not one. The defect was serious. Her future mother-in-law, Abigail, a famous New England woman whose authority over her turbulent husband, the second President, was hardly so great as that which she exercised over her son, the sixth to be, was troubled by the fear that Louisa might not be made of stuff stern enough, or brought up in conditions severe enough, to suit a New England climate, or to make an efficient wife for her paragon son, and Abigail was right on that point, as on most others where sound judgment was involved; but sound judgment is sometimes a source of weakness rather than of force, and John Quincy already had reason to think that his mother held sound judgments on the subject of daughters-in-law which human nature, since the fall of Eve, made Adams helpless to realize. Being three thousand miles away from his mother, and equally far in love, he married Louisa in London, July 26, 1797, and took her to Berlin to be the head of the United States Legation. During three or four exciting years, the young bride lived in Berlin;

²² Dates A.D. 354-430

whether she was happy or not, whether she was content or not, whether she was socially successful or not, her descendants did not surely know; but in any case she could by no chance have become educated there for a life in Quincy or Boston. In 1801 the overthrow of the Federalist Party drove her and her husband to America, and she became at last a member of the Quincy household, but by that time her children needed all her attention, and she remained there with occasional winters in Boston and Washington, till 1809. Her husband was made Senator in 1803, and in 1809 was appointed Minister to Russia. She went with him to St. Petersburg, taking her baby, Charles Francis, born in 1807; but broken-hearted at having to leave her two older boys behind. The life at St. Petersburg was hardly gay for her; they were far too poor to shine in that extravagant society; but she survived it, though her little girl baby did not, and in the winter of 1814-15, alone with the boy of seven years old, crossed Europe from St. Petersburg to Paris, in her travelling-carriage, passing through the armies, and reaching Paris in the *Cent Jours*²³ after Napoleon's return from Elba. Her husband next went to England as Minister, and she was for two years at the Court of the Regent. In 1817 her husband came home to be Secretary of State, and she lived for eight years in F Street, doing her work of entertainer for President Monroe's administration. Next she lived four miserable years in the White House. When that chapter was closed in 1829, she had earned the right to be tired and delicate, but she still had fifteen years to serve as wife of a Member of the House, after her husband went back to Congress in 1833. Then it was that the little Henry, her grandson, first remembered her, from 1843 to 1848, sitting in her panelled room, at breakfast, with her heavy silver teapot and sugar-bowl and cream-jug, which still exist somewhere as an heirloom of the modern safety-vault. By that time she was seventy years old or more, and thoroughly weary of 40 being beaten about a stormy world. To the boy she seemed singularly peaceful, a vision of silver gray, presiding over her old President and her Queen Anne mahogany; an exotic, like her Sèvres china; an object of deference to every one, and of great affection to her son Charles; but hardly more Bostonian than she

had been fifty years before, on her wedding-day, in the shadow of the Tower of London.

Such a figure was even less fitted than that of her old husband, the President, to impress on a boy's mind, the standards of the coming century. She was Louis Seize, like the furniture. The boy knew nothing of her interior life, which had been, as the venerable Abigail, long since at peace, foresaw, one of severe stress and little pure satisfaction. He never dreamed that from her might come some of those doubts and self-questionings, those hesitations, those rebellions against law and discipline, which marked more than one of her descendants; but he might even then have felt some vague instinctive suspicion that he was to inherit from her the seeds of the primal sin, the fall from grace, the curse of Abel, that he was not of pure New England stock, but half exotic. As a child of Quincy he was not a true Bostonian, but even as a child of Quincy he inherited a quarter taint of Maryland blood. Charles Francis, half Marylander by birth, had hardly seen Boston till he was ten years old, when his parents left him there at school in 1817, and he never forgot the experience. He was to be nearly as old as his mother had been in 1845, before he quite accepted Boston, or Boston quite accepted him.

A boy who began his education in these surroundings, with physical strength inferior to that of his brothers, and with a certain delicacy of mind and bone, ought rightly to have felt at home in the eighteenth century and should, in proper self-respect, have rebelled against the standards of the nineteenth. The atmosphere of his first ten years must have been very like that of his grandfather at the same age, from 1767 till 1776, barring the battle of Bunker Hill, and even as late as 1846, the battle of Bunker Hill remained actual. The tone of Boston society was colonial. The true Bostonian always knelt in self-abasement before the majesty of English standards; far from concealing it as a weakness, he was proud of it as his strength. The eighteenth century ruled society long after 1850. Perhaps the boy began to shake it off rather earlier than most of his mates.

Indeed this prehistoric stage of education ended rather abruptly with his tenth year. One winter morning he was conscious of a certain confusion in the house in Mount Vernon Street, and gathered, from such words as he could catch, that the President, who happened to be then staying there, on his

²³ The "hundred days" extended from the middle of March to June 22, 1815, when Napoleon, after his escape from Elba, tried to regain control of his lost empire. The effort ended at the Battle of Waterloo.

way to Washington, had fallen and hurt himself. Then he heard the word paralysis. After that day he came to associate the word with the figure of his grandfather, in a tall-backed, invalid armchair, on one side of the spare bedroom fireplace, and one of his old friends, Dr. Parkman or P. P. F. Degrand, on the other side, both dozing.

The end of this first, or ancestral and Revolutionary, chapter came on February 21, 1848—and the month of February brought life and death as a family habit—when the eighteenth century, as an actual and living companion, vanished. If the scene on the floor of the House, when the old President fell, struck the still simple-minded American public with a sensation unusually dramatic, its effect on a ten-year-old boy, whose boy-life was fading away with the life of his grandfather, could not be slight. One had to pay for Revolutionary patriots, grandfathers and grandmothers, Presidents, diplomats, Queen Anne mahogany and Louis Seize chairs, as well as for Stuart portraits. Such things wait young life. Americans commonly believed that they ruined it, and perhaps the practical common-sense of the American mind judged right. Many a boy might be ruined by much less than the emotions of the funeral service in the Quincy church, with its surroundings of national respect and family pride. By another dramatic chance it happened that the clergyman of the parish, Dr. Lunt, was an unusual pulpit orator, the ideal of a somewhat austere intellectual type, such as the school of Buckminster and Channing inherited from the old Congregational clergy. His extraordinarily refined appearance, his dignity of manner, his deeply cadenced voice, his remarkable English and his fine appreciation, gave to the funeral service a character that left an overwhelming impression on the boy's mind. He was to see many great functions—funerals and festivals—in after-life, till his only thought was to see no more, but he never again witnessed anything nearly so impressive to him as the last services at Quincy over the body of one President and the ashes of another.

The effect of the Quincy service was deepened by the official ceremony which afterwards took place in Faneuil Hall, when the boy was taken to hear his uncle, Edward Everett, deliver a Eulogy. Like all Mr. Everett's orations, it was an admirable piece of oratory, such as only an admirable orator and scholar could create, too good for a ten-year-old boy to

appreciate at its value, but already the boy knew that the dead President could not be in it, and had even learned why he would have been out of place there, for knowledge was beginning to come fast. The shadow of the War of 1812 still hung over State Street, the shadow of the Civil War to come had already begun to darken Faneuil Hall. No rhetoric could have reconciled Mr. Everett's audience to his subject. How could he say there, to an assemblage of Bostonians in the heart of mercantile Boston, that the only distinctive mark of all the Adamses, since old Sam Adams's father a hundred and fifty years before, had been their inherited quarrel with State Street, which had again and again broken out into riot, bloodshed, personal feuds, foreign and civil war, wholesale banishments and confiscations, until the history of Florence was hardly more turbulent than that of Boston? How could he whisper the word Hartford Convention²⁴ before the men who had made it? What would have been said had he suggested the chance of Secession and Civil War?

Thus already, at ten years old, the boy found himself standing face to face with a dilemma that might have puzzled an early Christian. What was he?—where was he going? Even then he felt that something was wrong, but he concluded that it must be Boston. Quincy had always been right, for Quincy represented a moral principle—the principle of resistance to Boston. His Adams ancestors must have been right, since they were always hostile to State Street. If State Street was wrong, Quincy must be right! Turn the dilemma as he pleased, he still came back on the eighteenth century and the law of Resistance, of Truth, of Duty, and of Freedom. He was a ten-year-old priest and politician. He could under no circumstances have guessed what the next fifty years had in store, and no one could teach him, but sometimes, in his old age, he wondered—and could never decide—whether the most clear and certain knowledge would have helped him. Supposing he had seen a New York stock-list of 1900, and had studied the statistics of railways, telegraphs, coal, and steel—would he have quitted his eighteenth-century, his ancestral prejudices, his abstract ideals, his semi-clerical training, and the rest, in order to perform an expiatory pilgrimage to State Street, and ask for

²⁴ A political assembly which met in Hartford, Connecticut, December 15, 1814, to January 5, 1815, to protest the war with Great Britain.

the fatted calf of his grandfather Brooks and a clerkship in the Suffolk Bank?

Sixty years afterwards he was still unable to make up his mind. Each course had its advantages, but the material advantages, looking back, seemed to lie wholly in State Street.

CHAPTER XXII

Chicago (1893)

Drifting in the dead-water of the *fin-de-siècle*²⁵—and during this last decade every one talked, and seemed to feel *fin-de-siècle*—where not a breath stirred the idle air of education or fretted the mental torpor of self-content, one lived alone. Adams had long ceased going into society. For years he had not dined out of his own house, and in public his face was as unknown as that of an extinct statesman. He had often noticed that six months' oblivion amounts to newspaper-death, and that resurrection is rare.²⁶ Nothing is easier, if a man wants it, than rest, profound as the grave.

His friends sometimes took pity on him, and came to share a meal or pass a night on their passage south or northwards, but existence was, on the whole, exceedingly solitary, or seemed so to him. Of the society favorites who made the life of every dinner-table and of the halls of Congress—Tom Reed,²⁶ Bourke Cockran, Edward Wolcott—he knew not one. Although Calvin Brice was his next neighbor³⁰ for six years, entertaining lavishly as no one had ever entertained before in Washington, Adams never entered his house. W. C. Whitney²⁷ rivalled Senator Brice in hospitality, and was besides an old acquaintance of the reforming era, but Adams saw him as little as he saw his chief, President Cleveland, or President Harrison or Secretary Bayard²⁸ or Blaine²⁹ or Olney.³⁰ One has no choice but to go everywhere or nowhere. No one may pick and choose between houses, or accept hospitality without returning it.⁴⁰

²⁵ "End-of-the-century," used in literary circles as a term signifying decadence.

²⁶ Thomas Brackett Reed (1839–1902), lawyer, Congressman, Speaker of the House 1889–91, 1895–99.

²⁷ William Collins Whitney (1841–1904), financier, politician, Secretary of the Navy, 1885–89.

²⁸ Thomas Francis Bayard (1828–98), Senator from Delaware, Secretary of State 1885–89, Ambassador to Great Britain.

²⁹ James Gillespie Blaine (1830–93), Republican Congressman, Senator, unsuccessful candidate for Presidency, defeated by Cleveland.

³⁰ Richard Olney (1835–1917), U. S. Attorney General 1893–95, Secretary of State, 1895–97.

He loved solitude as little as others did; but he was unfit for social work, and he sank under the surface.

Luckily for such helpless animals as solitary men, the world is not only good-natured but even friendly and generous; it loves to pardon if pardon is not demanded as a right. Adams's social offences were many, and no one was more sensitive to it than himself; but a few houses always remained which he could enter without being asked, and quit without being noticed. One was John Hay's;³¹ another was Cabot Lodge's;³² a third led to an intimacy which had the singular effect of educating him in knowledge of the very class of American politician who had done most to block his intended path in life. Senator Cameron³³ of Pennsylvania had married in 1880 a young niece of Senator John Sherman of Ohio, thus making an alliance of dynastic importance in politics, and in society a reign of sixteen years, during which Mrs. Cameron and Mrs. Lodge led a career, without precedent and without succession, as the dispensers of sunshine over Washington. Both of them had been kind to Adams, and a dozen years of this intimacy had made him one of their habitual household, as he was of Hay's. In a small society, such ties between houses become political and social force. Without intention or consciousness, they fix one's status in the world. Whatever one's preferences in politics might be, one's house was bound to the Republican interest when sandwiched between Senator Cameron, John Hay, and Cabot Lodge, with Theodore Roosevelt equally at home in them all, and Cecil Spring-Rice³⁴ to unite them by impartial variety. The relation was daily, and the alliance undisturbed by power or patronage, since Mr. Harrison, in those respects, showed little more taste than Mr. Cleveland for the society and interests of this particular band of followers, whose relations with the White House were sometimes comic, but never intimate.

In February, 1893, Senator Cameron took his family to South Carolina, where he had bought an old

³¹ John Milton Hay (1838–1905), private secretary to President Lincoln, later Assistant Secretary of State, Ambassador to Great Britain, Secretary of State, poet, historian, co-author with John Nicolay of *Abraham Lincoln, A History*, in 10 vols. (1890).

³² Cabot Lodge (1850–1924), Congressman, Senator; in 1919 led opposition to League of Nations.

³³ James Donald Cameron (1833–1918), U. S. Senator 1877–97, controlled Republican political machine in Pennsylvania; Secretary of War, 1867–77.

³⁴ Sir Cecil Arthur Spring-Rice (1859–1918), British Ambassador to United States, 1913–18.

plantation at Coffin's Point on St Helena Island, and Adams, as one of the family, was taken, with the rest, to open the new experience. From there he went on to Havana, and came back to Coffin's Point to linger till near April. In May the Senator took his family to Chicago to see the Exposition,³⁵ and Adams went with them. Early in June, all sailed for England together, and at last, in the middle of July, all found themselves in Switzerland, at Piangins, Chamounix, and Zermatt. On July 22 they drove across the Furka¹⁰ Pass and went down by rail to Lucerne.

Months of close contact teach character, if character has interest, and to Adams the Cameron type had keen interest, ever since it had shipwrecked his career in the person of President Grant. Perhaps it owed life to Scotch blood, perhaps to the blood of Adam and Eve, the primitive strain of man, perhaps only to the blood of the cottager working against the blood of the townsman, but whatever it was, one liked it for its simplicity. The Pennsylvania mind, as²⁰ minds go, was not complex; it reasoned little and never talked, but in practical matters it was the steadiest of all American types; perhaps the most efficient, certainly the safest.

Adams had printed as much as this in his books, but had never been able to find a type to describe, the two great historical Pennsylvanians having been, as every one had so often heard, Benjamin Franklin of Boston and Albert Gallatin³⁶ of Geneva. Of Albert Gallatin, indeed, he had made a voluminous³⁰ study and an elaborate picture, only to show that he was, if American at all, a New Yorker, with a Calvinistic strain—rather Connecticut than Pennsylvanian. The true Pennsylvanian was a narrower type, as narrow as the kirk; as shy of other people's narrowness as a Yankee; as self-limited as a Puritan farmer. To him, none but Pennsylvanians were white. Chinaman, negro, Dago, Italian, Englishman, Yankee—all was one in the depths of Pennsylvanian consciousness. The mental machine could run only on what it⁴⁰ took for American lines. This was familiar, ever since one's study of President Grant in 1869, but in 1893,

as then, the type was admirably strong and useful if one wanted only to run on the same lines. Practically the Pennsylvanian forgot his prejudices when he allied his interests. He then became supple in action and large in motive, whatever he thought of his colleagues. When he happened to be right—which was, of course, whenever one agreed with him—he was the strongest American in America. As an ally he was worth all the rest, because he understood his own class, who were always a majority, and knew how to deal with them as no New Englander could. If one wanted work done in Congress, one did wisely to avoid asking a New Englander to do it. A Pennsylvanian not only could do it, but did it willingly, practically, and intelligently.

Never in the range of human possibilities had a Cameron believed in an Adams—or an Adams in a Cameron—but they had, curiously enough, almost always worked together. The Camerons had what the Adamses thought the political vice of reaching their objects without much regard to their methods. The loftiest virtue of the Pennsylvania machine had never been its scrupulous purity or sparkling professions. The machine worked by coarse means on coarse interests; but its practical success had been the most curious subject of study in American history. When one summed up the results of Pennsylvanian influence, one inclined to think that Pennsylvania set up the Government in 1789, saved it in 1861; created the American system, developed its iron and coal power; and invented its great railways. Following up the same line, in his studies of American character, Adams reached the result—to him altogether paradoxical—that Cameron's qualities and defects united in equal share to make him the most useful member of the Senate.

In the interest of studying, at last, a perfect and favorable specimen of this American type which had so persistently suppressed his own, Adams was slow to notice that Cameron strongly influenced him, but he could not see a trace of any influence which he exercised on Cameron. Not an opinion or a view of his on any subject was ever reflected back on him from Cameron's mind; not even an expression or a fact. Yet the difference in age was trifling, and in education slight. On the other hand, Cameron made deep impression on Adams, and in nothing so much as on the great subject of discussion that year—the question of silver.

³⁵ World's Columbian Exposition, held at Chicago from May 1 to October 30, 1893.

³⁶ Albert Gallatin (1761-1849) came to America from Switzerland in 1780, elected to U. S. Senate in 1793 but disqualified for insufficient residence. Secretary of U. S. Treasury, 1801-14; Minister to France 1816-23, and to Great Britain, 1826-27. President of National Bank of New York, 1831-39. In 1879 Adams edited his *Writings* and published a biography of him.

Adams had taken no interest in the matter, and knew nothing about it, except as a very tedious hobby of his friend Dana Horton; but inevitably, from the moment he was forced to choose sides, he was sure to choose silver. Every political idea and personal prejudice he ever dallied with held him to the silver standard, and made a barrier between him and gold. He knew well enough all that was to be said for the gold standard as economy, but he had never in his life taken politics for a pursuit of economy. One might have a political or an economical policy; one could not have both at the same time. This was heresy in the English school, but it had always been law in the American. Equally he knew all that was to be said on the moral side of the question, and he admitted that his interests were, as Boston maintained, wholly on the side of gold; but, had they been ten times as great as they were, he could not have helped his bankers or croupiers to load the dice and pack the cards to make sure his winning the stakes. At least he was bound to profess disapproval—or thought he was. From early childhood his moral principles had struggled blindly with his interests, but he was certain of one law that ruled all others—masses of men invariably follow interests in deciding morals. Morality is a private and costly luxury. The morality of the silver or gold standards was to be decided by popular vote, and the popular vote would be decided by interests; but on which side lay the larger interest? To him the interest was political; he thought it probably his last chance of standing up for his eighteenth-century principles, strict construction, limited powers, George Washington, John Adams, and the rest. He had, in a half-hearted way, struggled all his life against State Street, banks, capitalism altogether, as he knew it in old England or New England, and he was fated to make his last resistance behind the silver standard.

For him this result was clear, and if he erred, he erred in company with nine men out of ten in Washington, for there was little difference on the merits. Adams was sure to learn backwards, but the case seemed entirely different with Cameron, a typical Pennsylvanian, a practical politician, whom all the reformers, including all the Adamses, had abused for a lifetime for subservience to moneyed interests and political jobbery. He was sure to go with the banks and corporations which had made and sustained him. On the contrary, he stood out obstinately as the lead-

ing champion of silver in the East. The reformers, represented by the *Evening Post* and Godkin, whose personal interests lay with the gold standard, at once assumed that Senator Cameron had a personal interest in silver, and denounced his corruption as hotly as though he had been convicted of taking a bribe.

More than silver and gold, the moral standard interested Adams. His own interests were with gold, but he supported silver; the *Evening Post's* and Godkin's interests were with gold, and they frankly said so, yet they avowedly pursued their interests even into politics; Cameron's interests had always been with the corporations, yet he supported silver. Thus morality required that Adams should be condemned for going against his interests; that Godkin was virtuous in following his interests; and that Cameron was a scoundrel whatever he did.

Granting that one of the three was a moral idiot, which was it:—Adams or Godkin or Cameron? Until a Council or a Pope or a Congress or the newspapers or a popular election has decided a question of doubtful morality, individuals are apt to err, especially when putting money into their own pockets; but in democracies, the majority alone gives law. To any one who knew the relative popularity of Cameron and Godkin, the idea of a popular vote between them seemed excessively humorous; yet the popular vote in the end did decide against Cameron, for Godkin.

The Boston moralist and reformer went on, as always, like Dr. Johnson, impatiently stamping his foot and following his interests, or his antipathies; but the true American, slow to grasp new and complicated ideas, groped in the dark to discover where his greater interest lay. As usual, the banks taught him. In the course of fifty years the banks taught one many wise lessons for which an insect had to be grateful whether it liked them or not; but of all the lessons Adams learned from them, none compared in dramatic effect with that of July 22, 1893, when, after talking silver all the morning with Senator Cameron on the top of their travelling-carriage crossing the Furka Pass, they reached Lucerne in the afternoon, where Adams found letters from his brothers requesting his immediate return to Boston because the community was bankrupt and he was probably a beggar.

If he wanted education, he knew no quicker mode

of learning a lesson than that of being struck on the head by it, and yet he was himself surprised at his own slowness to understand what had struck him. For several years a sufferer from insomnia, his first thought was of beggary of nerves, and he made ready to face a sleepless night, but although his mind tried to wrestle with the problem how any man could be ruined who had, months before, paid off every dollar of debt he knew himself to owe, he gave up that insoluble riddle in order to fall back on the larger principle that beggary could be no more for him than it was for others who were more valuable members of society, and, with that, he went to sleep like a good citizen, and the next day started for Quincy where he arrived August 7.

As a starting-point for a new education at fifty-five years old, the shock of finding one's self suspended, for several months, over the edge of bankruptcy, without knowing how one got there, or how to get away, is to be strongly recommended. By slow degrees the situation dawned on him that the banks had lent him, among others, some money—thousands of millions were—as bankruptcy—the same—for which he, among others, was responsible and of which he knew no more than they. The humor of this situation seemed to him so much more pointed than the terror, as to make him laugh at himself with a sincerity he had been long strange to. As far as he could comprehend, he had nothing to lose that he cared about, but the banks stood to lose their existence. Money mattered as little to him as to anybody, but money was their life. For the first time he had the banks in his power, he could afford to laugh, and the whole community was in the same position, though few laughed. All sat down on the banks and asked what the banks were going to do about it. To Adams the situation seemed farcical, but the more he saw of it, the less he understood it. He was quite sure that nobody understood it much better. Blindly some very powerful energy was at work, doing something that nobody wanted done. When Adams went to his bank to draw a hundred dollars of his own money on deposit, the cashier refused to let him have more than fifty, and Adams accepted the fifty without complaint because he was himself refusing to let the banks have some hundreds or thousands that belonged to them. Each wanted to help the other, yet both refused to pay their debts, and he could find no answer to the question which was re-

sponsible for getting the other into the situation, since lenders and borrowers were the same interest and socially the same person. Evidently the force was one, its operation was mechanical, its effect must be proportional to its power, but no one knew what it meant, and most people dismissed it as an emotion—a panic—that meant nothing.

Men died like flies under the strain, and Boston grew suddenly old, haggard, and thin. Adams alone waxed fat and was happy, for at last he had got hold of his world and could finish his education, interrupted for twenty years. He cared not whether it were worth finishing, if only it amused, but he seemed, for the first time since 1870, to feel that something new and curious was about to happen to the world. Great changes had taken place since 1870 in the forces at work, the old machine ran far behind its duty, somewhere—somehow—it was bound to break down, and if it happened to break precisely over one's head, it gave the better chance for study.

For the first time in several years he saw much of his brother Brooks in Quincy, and was surprised to find him absorbed in the same perplexities. Brooks was then a man of forty-five years old, a strong writer and a vigorous thinker who irritated too many Boston conventions ever to suit the atmosphere, but the two brothers could talk to each other without atmosphere and were used to audiences of one. Brooks had discovered or developed a law of history that civilization followed the exchanges, and having worked it out for the Mediterranean was working it out for the Atlantic. Everything American, as well as most things European and Asiatic, became unstable by this law, seeking new equilibrium and compelled to find it. Loving paradox, Brooks, with the advantages of ten years' study, had swept away much rubbish in the effort to build up a new line of thought for himself, but he found that no paradox compared with that of daily events. The facts were constantly outrunning his thoughts. The instability was greater than he calculated; the speed of acceleration passed bounds. Among other general rules he laid down the paradox that, in the social disequilibrium between capital and labor, the logical outcome was not collectivism, but anarchism; and Henry made note of it for study.

By the time he got back to Washington on September 19, the storm having partly blown over, life had taken on a new face, and one so interesting that

he set off to Chicago to study the Exposition again, and stayed there a fortnight absorbed in it. He found matter of study to fill a hundred years, and his education spread over chaos. Indeed, it seemed to him as though, this year, education went mad. The silver question, thorny as it was, fell into relations as simple as words of one syllable, compared with the problems of credit and exchange that came to complicate it; and when one sought rest at Chicago, educational game started like rabbits from every building, and ran out of sight among thousands of its kind before one could mark its burrow. The Exposition itself defied philosophy. One might find fault till the last gate closed, one could still explain nothing that needed explanation. As a scenic display, Paris had never approached it, but the inconceivable scenic display consisted in its being there at all—more surprising, as it was, than anything else on the continent, Niagara Falls, the Yellowstone Geysers, and the whole railway system thrown in, since these were all natural products in their place; while, since Noah's Ark, no such Babcl of loose and ill-joined, such vague and ill-defined and unrelated thoughts and half-thoughts and experimental outcries as the Exposition, had ever ruffled the surface of the Lakes.

The first astonishment became greater every day. That the Exposition should be a natural growth and product of the Northwest offered a step in evolution to startle Darwin; but that it should be anything else seemed an idea more startling still; and even granting it were not—admitting it to be a sort of industrial, speculative growth and product of the Beaux Arts artistically induced to pass the summer on the shore of Lake Michigan—could it be made to seem at home there? Was the American made to seem at home in it? Honestly, he had the air of enjoying it as though it were all his own; he felt it was good; he was proud of it; for the most part, he acted as though he had passed his life in landscape gardening and architectural decoration. If he had not done it himself, he had known how to get it done to suit him, as he knew how to get his wives and daughters dressed at Worth's or Paquin's. Perhaps he could not do it again; the next time he would want to do it himself and would show his own faults; but for the moment he seemed to have leaped directly from Corinth and Syracuse and Venice, over the heads of London and New York, to impose classical standards on plastic Chicago. Critics had no trouble in criticising the clas-

sicism, but all trading cities had always shown traders' taste, and, to the stern purist of religious faith, no art was thinner than Venetian Gothic. All trader's taste smelt of bric-à-brac; Chicago tried at least to give her taste a look of unity.

One sat down to ponder on the steps beneath Richard Hunt's³⁷ dome almost as deeply as on the steps of Ara Cœli,³⁸ and much to the same purpose. Here was a breach of continuity—a rupture in historical sequence! Was it real, or only apparent? One's personal universe hung on the answer, for, if the rupture was real and the new American world could take this sharp and conscious twist towards ideals, one's personal friends would come in, at last, as winners in the great American chariot-race for fame. If the people of the Northwest actually knew what was good when they saw it, they would some day talk about Hunt and Richardson,³⁹ La Farge and St. Gaudens,⁴⁰ Burnham⁴¹ and McKim,⁴² and Stanford White⁴³ when their politicians and millionaires were otherwise forgotten. The artists and architects who had done the work offered little encouragement to hope it; they talked freely enough, but not in terms that one cared to quote; and to them the Northwest refused to look artistic. They talked as though they worked only for themselves; as though art, to the Western people, was a stage decoration; a diamond shirt-stud; a paper collar; but possibly the architects of Pæstum⁴⁴ and Gergenti⁴⁵ had talked in the same way, and the Greek had said the same thing of Semitic Carthage two thousand years ago.

Jostled by these hopes and doubts, one turned to the exhibits for help, and found it. The industrial schools tried to teach so much and so quickly that the instruction ran to waste. Some millions of other people felt the same helplessness, but few of them

³⁷ Richard Morris Hunt (1827-95), architect who designed the Administration Building of the Chicago World's Fair, the main section of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the National Observatory, Washington, D. C.

³⁸ Santa Maria in Ara Cœli, Saint Mary of the Altar of Heaven, an ancient church in Rome.

³⁹ Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-86), American architect.

⁴⁰ Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848-1907), sculptor who executed the statue that Adams erected at his wife's tomb.

⁴¹ Daniel Hudson Burnham (1846-1912), one of the chief architects of the Chicago World's Fair.

⁴² Charles Follen McKim (1847-1909) helped design the Boston Public Library and buildings at Columbia University.

⁴³ Stanford White (1853-1906) designed famous churches and other buildings in New York, including Hall of Fame Terrace of New York University, at University Heights.

⁴⁴ Ancient Greek colony in Italy, founded 600 B.C.

⁴⁵ Capital of province in Sicily; architectural remains date back before the Carthaginian conquest.

were seeking education, and to them helplessness seemed natural and normal, for they had grown up in the habit of thinking a steam-engine or a dynamo as natural as the sun, and expected to understand one as little as the other. For the historian alone the Exposition made a serious effort. Historical exhibits were common, but they never went far enough, none were thoroughly worked out. One of the best was that of the Cunard steamers, but still a student hungry for results found himself obliged to waste a 10 pencil and several sheets of paper trying to calculate exactly when, according to the given increase of power, tonnage, and speed, the growth of the ocean steamer would reach its limits. His figures brought him, he thought, to the year 1927, another generation to spare before force, space, and time should meet. The ocean steamer ran the surest line of triangulation into the future, because it was the nearest of man's products to a unity, railroads taught less because they seemed already finished except for mere 20 increase in number, explosives taught most, but needed a tribe of chemists, physicists, and mathematicians to explain, the dynamo taught least because it had barely reached infancy, and, if its progress was to be constant at the rate of the last ten years, it would result in infinite costless energy within a generation. One lingered long among the dynamos, for they were new, and they gave to history a new phase. Men of science could never understand the ignorance and naiveté of the historian, who, when 30 he came suddenly on a new power, asked naturally what it was, did it pull or did it push? Was it a screw or thrust? Did it flow or vibrate? Was it a wire or a mathematical line? And a score of such questions to which he expected answers and was astonished to get none.

Education ran riot at Chicago, at least for retarded minds which had never faced in concrete form so many matters of which they were ignorant. Men who knew nothing whatever—who had never run a 40 steam-engine, the simplest of forces—who had never put their hands on a lever—had never touched an electric battery—never talked through a telephone, and had not the shadow of a notion what amount of force was meant by a *watt* or an *ampère* or an *erg*, or any other term of measurement introduced within a hundred years—had no choice but to sit down on the steps and brood as they had never brooded on the benches of Harvard College, either as student or

professor, aghast at what they had said and done in all these years, and still more ashamed of the child-like ignorance and babbling futility of the society that let them say and do it. The historical mind can think only in historical processes, and probably this was the first time since historians existed, that any of them had sat down helpless before a mechanical sequence. Before a metaphysical or a theological or a political sequence, most historians had felt helpless, but the single clew to which they had hitherto trusted was the unity of natural force.

Did he himself quite know what he meant? Certainly not! If he had known enough to state his problem, his education would have been complete at once. Chicago asked in 1893 for the first time the question whether the American people knew where they were driving. Adams answered, for one, that he did not know, but would try to find out. On reflecting sufficiently deeply, under the shadow of Richard Hunt's architecture, he decided that the American people probably knew no more than he did, but that they might still be driving or drifting unconsciously to some point in thought, as their solar system was said to be drifting towards some point in space, and that, possibly, if relations enough could be observed, this point might be fixed. Chicago was the first expression of American thought as a unity; one must start there.

Washington was the second. When he got back there, he fell headlong into the extra session of Congress called to repeal the Silver Act. The silver minority made an obstinate attempt to prevent it, and most of the majority had little heart in the creation of a single gold standard. The banks alone, and the dealers in exchange, insisted upon it; the political parties divided according to capitalistic geographical lines, Senator Cameron offering almost the only exception; but they mixed with unusual good-temper, and made liberal allowance for each others' actions and motives. The struggle was rather less inimitable than such struggles generally were, and it ended like a comedy. On the evening of the final vote, Senator Cameron came back from the Capitol with Senator Bruce, Senator Jones, Senator Lodge, and Moreton Frewen, all in the gayest of humors as though they were rid of a heavy responsibility. Adams, too, in a bystander's spirit, felt light in mind. He had stood up for his eighteenth century, his Constitution of 1789, his George Washington, his Harvard College,

his Quincy, and his Plymouth Pilgrims, as long as any one would stand up with him. He had said it was hopeless twenty years before, but he had kept on, in the same old attitude, by habit and taste, until he found himself altogether alone. He had hugged his antiquated dislike of bankers and capitalistic society until he had become little better than a crank. He had known for years that he must accept the régime, but he had known a great many other disagreeable certainties—like age, senility, and death—against 10 which one made what little resistance one could. The matter was settled at last by the people. For a hundred years, between 1793 and 1893, the American people had hesitated, vacillated, swayed forward and back, between two forces, one simply industrial, the other capitalistic, centralizing, and mechanical. In 1893, the issue came on the single gold standard, and the majority at last declared itself, once for all, in favor of the capitalistic system with all its necessary machinery. All one's friends, all one's best citi- 20 zens, reformers, churches, colleges, educated classes, had joined the banks to force submission to capitalism; a submission long foreseen by the mere law of mass. Of all forms of society or government, this was the one he liked least, but his likes or dislikes were as antiquated as the rebel doctrine of State rights. A capitalistic system had been adopted, and if it were to be run at all, it must be run by capital and by capitalistic methods; for nothing could surpass the nonsensicality of trying to run so complex and so 30 concentrated a machine by Southern and Western farmers in grotesque alliance with city day-laborers, as had been tried in 1800 and 1828, and had failed even under simple conditions.

There, education in domestic politics stopped. The rest was question of gear; of running machinery; of economy; and involved no disputed principle. Once admitted that the machine must be efficient, society might dispute in what social interest it should be run, but in any case it must work concentration. 40 Such great revolutions commonly leave some bitterness behind, but nothing in politics ever surprised Henry Adams more than the ease with which he and his silver friends slipped across the chasm, and alighted on the single gold standard and the capitalistic system with its methods; the protective tariff; the corporations and trusts; the trades-unions and socialistic paternalism which necessarily made their complement; the whole mechanical consolidation of

force, which ruthlessly stamped out the life of the class into which Adams was born, but created monopolies capable of controlling the new energies that America adored.

Society rested, after sweeping into the ash-heap these cinders of a misdirected education. After this vigorous impulse, nothing remained for a historian but to ask—how long and how far!

CHAPTER XXV

The Dynamo and the Virgin (1900)

Until the Great Exposition of 1900 closed its doors in November, Adams haunted it, aching to absorb knowledge, and helpless to find it. He would have liked to know how much of it could have been grasped by the best-informed man in the world. While he was thus meditating chaos, Langley⁴⁶ came by, and showed it to him. At Langley's behest, the Exhibition dropped its superfluous rags and stripped itself to the skin, for Langley knew what to study, and why, and how; while Adams might as well have stood outside in the night, staring at the Milky Way. Yet Langley said nothing new, and taught nothing that one might not have learned from Lord Bacon, three hundred years before; but though one should have known the "Advancement of Science" as well as one knew the "Comedy of Errors," the literary knowledge counted for nothing until 50 some teacher should show how to apply it. Bacon took a vast deal of trouble in teaching King James I and his subjects, American or other, towards the year 1620,⁴⁷ that true science was the development or economy of forces; yet an elderly American in 1900 knew neither the formula nor the forces; or even so much as to say to himself that his historical business in the Exposition concerned only the economies or developments of force since 1893, when he began the study at Chicago.

Nothing in education is so astonishing as the amount of ignorance it accumulates in the form of inert facts. Adams had looked at most of the accumulations of art in the storehouses called Art Museums; yet he did not know how to look at the art

⁴⁶ Samuel Pierpont Langley (1834-1906), astronomer and airplane pioneer, in 1896 achieved first flight of a mechanically propelled heavier-than-air machine, now an exhibit in National Museum, Washington, D. C.

⁴⁷ Adams has in mind Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, 1605.

exhibits of 1900. He had studied Karl Marx and his doctrines of history with profound attention, yet he could not apply them at Paris. Langley, with the ease of a great master of experiment, threw out of the field every exhibit that did not reveal a new application of force, and naturally threw out, to begin with, almost the whole art exhibit. Equally, he ignored almost the whole industrial exhibit. He led his pupil directly to the forces. His chief interest was in new motors to make his airdship feasible, and he taught Adams the astonishing complexities of the new Daimler⁴⁸ motor, and of the automobile, which, since 1893, had become a nightmare at a hundred kilometres an hour, almost as destructive as the electric tram which was only ten years older, and threatening to become as terrible as the locomotive steam-engine itself, which was almost exactly Adams's own age.

Then he showed his scholar the great hall of dynamos, and explained how little he knew about electricity or force of any kind, even of his own special sun, which spouted heat in inconceivable volume, but which, as far as he knew, might spout less or more, at any time, for all the certainty he felt in it. To him, the dynamo itself was but an ingenious channel for conveying somewhere the heat latent in a few tons of poor coal hidden in a dirty engine-house carefully kept out of sight, but to Adams the dynamo became a symbol of infinity. As he grew accustomed to the great gallery of machines, he began to feel the forty-foot dynamos as a moral force, much as the early Christians felt the Cross. The planet itself seemed less impressive, in its old-fashioned, deliberate, annual or daily revolution, than this huge wheel, revolving within arm's-length at some vertiginous speed, and barely murmuring—scarcely humming an audible warning to stand a hair's-breadth further for respect of power—while it would not wake the baby lying close against its frame. Before the end, one began to play to it, inherited instinct taught the natural expression of man before silent and infinite force. Among the thousand symbols of ultimate energy, the dynamo was not so human as some, but it was the most expressive.

Yet the dynamo, next to the steam-engine, was the most familiar of exhibits. For Adams's objects

its value lay chiefly in its occult mechanism. Between the dynamo in the gallery of machines and the engine-house outside, the break of continuity amounted to abysmal fracture for a historian's objects. No more relation could he discover between the steam and the electric current than between the Cross and the cathedral. The forces were interchangeable if not reversible, but he could see only an absolute *fiat* in electricity as in faith. Langley could not help him. Indeed, Langley seemed to be worried by the same trouble, for he constantly repeated that the new forces were anarchical, and specially that he was not responsible for the new rays, that were little short of parricidal in their wicked spirit towards science. His own rays, with which he had doubled the solar spectrum, were altogether harmless and beneficent, but Radium denied its God—or, what was to Langley the same thing, denied the truths of his Science. The force was wholly new.

A historian who asked only to learn enough to be as futile as Langley or Kelvin,⁴⁹ made rapid progress under this teaching, and mixed himself up in the tangle of ideas until he achieved a sort of Paradise of ignorance vastly consoling to his fatigued senses. He wrapped himself in vibrations and rays which were new, and he would have hugged Marconi⁵⁰ and Branly⁵¹ had he met them, as he hugged the dynamo, while he lost his arithmetic in trying to figure out the equation between the discoveries and the economics of force. The economics, like the discoveries, were absolute, super-sensual, occult, incapable of expression in horse-power. What mathematical equivalent could he suggest as the value of a Branly coherer? Frozen air, or the electric furnace, had some scale of measurement, no doubt, if somebody could invent a thermometer adequate to the purpose, but X-rays had played no part whatever in man's consciousness, and the atom itself had figured only as a fiction of thought. In these seven years man had translated himself into a new universe which had no common scale of measurement with the old. He had entered a supersensual world, in which he could measure nothing except by chance.

⁴⁹ William Thompson, Lord Kelvin (1824-1907), Scotch physicist.

⁵⁰ Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937), invented wireless telegraphy in 1895.

⁵¹ Edouard Branly (1846-1940), French physicist who invented a coherer (1890) that made wireless telegraphy possible.

⁴⁸ Gottlieb Daimler's inventions in 1884 made possible the modern gasoline-burning automobile.

collisions of movements imperceptible to his senses, perhaps even imperceptible to his instruments, but perceptible to each other, and so to some known ray at the end of the scale. Langley seemed prepared for anything, even for an indeterminable number of universes interfused—physics stark mad in metaphysics.

Historians undertake to arrange sequences,—called stories, or histories—assuming in silence a relation of cause and effect. These assumptions, hidden in the depths of dusty libraries, have been astounding, but commonly unconscious and childlike; so much so, that if any captious critic were to drag them to light, historians would probably reply, with one voice, that they had never supposed themselves required to know what they were talking about. Adams, for one, had toiled in vain to find out what he meant. He had even published a dozen volumes of American history for no other purpose than to satisfy himself whether, by the severest process of stating, with the least possible comment, such facts as seemed sure, in such order as seemed rigorously consequent, he could fix for a familiar moment a necessary sequence of human movement. The result had satisfied him as little as at Harvard College. Where he saw sequence, other men saw something quite different, and no one saw the same unit of measure. He cared little about his experiments and less about his statesmen, who seemed to him quite as ignorant as himself and, as a rule, no more honest; but he insisted on a relation of sequence, and if he could not reach it by one method, he would try as many methods as science knew. Satisfied that the sequence of men led to nothing and that the sequence of their society could lead no further, while the mere sequence of time was artificial, and the sequence of thought was chaos, he turned at last to the sequence of force; and thus it happened that, after ten years' pursuit, he found himself lying in the Gallery of Machines at the Great Exposition of 1900, his historical neck broken by the sudden irruption of forces totally new.

Since no one else showed much concern, an elderly person without other cares had no need to betray alarm. The year 1900 was not the first to upset schoolmasters. Copernicus and Galileo had broken many professorial necks about 1600; Columbus had stood the world on its head towards 1500; but the nearest approach to the revolution of 1900 was that

of 310, when Constantine set up the Cross.⁵² The rays that Langley disowned, as well as those which he fathered were occult, supersensual, irrational; they were a revelation of mysterious energy like that of the Cross; they were what, in terms of mediæval science, were called immediate modes of the divine substance.

The historian was thus reduced to his last resources. Clearly if he was bound to reduce all these forces to a common value, this common value could have no measure but that of their attraction on his own mind. He must treat them as they had been felt; as convertible, reversible, interchangeable attractions on thought. He made up his mind to venture it; he would risk translating rays into faith. Such a reversible process would vastly amuse a chemist, but the chemist could not deny that he, or some of his fellow physicists, could feel the force of both. When Adams was a boy in Boston, the best chemist in the place had probably never heard of Venus except by way of scandal, or of the Virgin except as idolatry; neither had he heard of dynamos or automobiles or radium; yet his mind was ready to feel the force of all, though the rays were unborn and the women were dead.

Here opened another totally new education, which promised to be by far the most hazardous of all. The knife-edge along which he must crawl,⁵³ like Sir Lancelot in the twelfth century, divided two kingdoms of force which had nothing in common but attraction. They were as different as a magnet is from gravitation, supposing one knew what a magnet was, or gravitation, or love. The force of the Virgin was still felt at Lourdes, and seemed to be as potent as X-rays; but in America neither Venus nor Virgin ever had value as force—at most as sentiment. No American had ever been truly afraid of either.

This problem in dynamics gravely perplexed an American historian. The Woman had once been supreme; in France she still seemed potent, not merely as a sentiment, but as a force. Why was she unknown in America? For evidently America was ashamed of her, and she was ashamed of herself, otherwise they would not have strewn fig-leaves so

⁵² Constantine I (272?–337), Roman emperor, saw the sign of the Cross in the heavens before a battle which he won, and afterwards caused Christianity to be recognized by the state.

⁵³ Allusion to an episode in a mediæval romance, *Chevalier du Charatte*, by Chrétien de Troyes.

profusely all over her. When she was a true force, she was ignorant of fig-leaves, but the monthly-magazine-made American female had not a feature that would have been recognized by Adam. The trait was notorious, and often humorous, but any one brought up among Puntans knew that sex was sin. In any previous age, sex was strength. Neither art nor beauty was needed. Everyone, even among Puntans, knew that neither Diana of the Ephesians nor any of the Oriental goddesses was worshipped for her beauty. She was goddess because of her force, she was the animated dynamo, she was reproduction—the greatest and most mysterious of all energies, all she needed was to be fecund. Singularly enough, not one of Adams's many schools of education had ever drawn his attention to the opening lines of Lucretius,⁵⁴ though they were perhaps the finest in all Latin literature, where the poet invoked Venus exactly as Dante invoked the Virgin —

*Quae quoniam rerum naturam sola gubernas*⁵⁵

The Venus of Epicurean philosophy survived in the Virgin of the Schools:—

Donna, sei tanto grande, e tanto vali,
Che qual vuol grazia, e a te non ricorre,
Sua disianza vuol volar senz' al!⁵⁶

All this was to American thought as though it had never existed. The true American knew something of the facts, but nothing of the feelings, he read the letter, but he never felt the law. Before this historical chasm, a mind like that of Adams felt itself helpless, he turned from the Virgin to the Dynamo as though he were a Branly coherer. On one side, at the Louvre and at Chartres, as he knew by the record of work actually done and still before his eyes, was the highest energy ever known to man, the creator of four-fifths of his noblest art, exercising vastly more attraction over the human mind than all the steam-engines and dynamos ever dreamed of, and yet this energy was unknown to the American mind. An American Virgin would never dare command, an American Venus would never dare exist.

The question, which to any plain American of the nineteenth century seemed as remote as it did to

Adams, drew him almost violently to study, once it was posed, and on this point Langleys were as useless as though they were Herbert Spencers⁵⁷ or dynamos. The idea survived only as art. There one turned as naturally as though the artist were himself a woman. Adams began to ponder, asking himself whether he knew of any American artist who had ever insisted on the power of sex, as every classic had always done, but he could think only of Walt Whitman, Bret Harte as far as the magazines would let him venture; and one or two painters, for the flesh-tones. All the rest had used sex for sentiment, never for force, to them, Eve was a tender flower, and Herodias⁵⁸ an unfeminine horror. American Art, like the American language and American education, was as far as possible sexless. Society regarded this victory over sex as its greatest triumph, and the historian readily admitted it, since the moral issue, for the moment, did not concern one who was studying the relations of unmoral force. He cared nothing for the sex of the dynamo until he could measure its energy.

Vaguely seeking a clue, he wandered through the art exhibit, and, in his stroll, stopped almost every day before St. Gaudens's General Sherman, which had been given the central post of honor.⁵⁹ St. Gaudens himself was in Paris, putting on the work his usual interminable last touches, and listening to the usual contradictory suggestions of brother sculptors. Of all the American artists who gave to American art whatever life it breathed in the seventies, St. Gaudens was perhaps the most sympathetic, but certainly the most inarticulate. General Grant or Don Camrion had scarcely less instinct of rhetoric than he. All the others—the Hunts, Richardson, John La Farge, Stanford White—were exuberant; only St. Gaudens could never discuss or dilate on an emotion, or suggest artistic arguments for giving to his work the forms that he felt. He never laid down the law, or affected the despot, or became brutalized like Whistler⁶⁰ by the brutalities of his world. He required no incense; he was no egoist; his simplicity of thought was excessive; he could not imitate, or give any form but his own to the creations of his hand. No one felt more strongly than he the strength of

⁵⁴ Roman poet (96–55 B.C.), author of *De Rerum Natura*.

⁵⁵ "Since you alone control the nature of things."

⁵⁶ *Divine Comedy*, "Paradise," xxxiii 13–16. Prose translation: "Lady, thou art so great, and so avalest, that who so would have grace, and has not recourse to thee, would have his desire fly without wings."

⁵⁷ Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), social philosopher who wrote on evolution; helped to popularize Darwinism in America.

⁵⁸ Herod's wife, who demanded the death of John the Baptist —see Matthew xiv.

⁵⁹ Now at the entrance of Central Park, New York.

⁶⁰ James McNeil Whistler (1834–1903), American artist who became famous in Europe for his satirical humor.

other men, but the idea that they could affect him never stirred an image in his mind.

This summer his health was poor and his spirits were low. For such a temper, Adams was not the best companion, since his own gaiety was not *folle*; ⁶¹ but he risked going now and then to the studio on Mont Parnasse to draw him out for a stroll in the Bois de Boulogne, or dinner as pleased his moods, and in return St. Gaudens sometimes let Adams go about in his company.

Once St. Gaudens took him down to Amiens, with a party of Frenchmen, to see the cathedral. Not until they found themselves actually studying the sculpture of the western portal, did it dawn on Adams's mind that, for his purposes, St. Gaudens on that spot had more interest to him than the cathedral itself. Great men before great monuments express great truths, provided they are not taken too solemnly. Adams never tired of quoting the supreme phrase of his idol Gibbon, ⁶² before the Gothic cathedrals: "I darted a contemptuous look on the stately monuments of superstition." Even in the footnotes of his history, Gibbon had never inserted a bit of humor more human than this and one would have paid largely for a photograph of the fat little historian, on the background of Notre Dame of Amiens, trying to persuade his readers—perhaps himself—that he was darting a contemptuous look on the stately monument, for which he felt in fact the respect which every man of his vast study and active ³⁰ mind always feels before objects worthy of it; but besides the humor, one felt also the relation. Gibbon ignored the Virgin, because in 1789 religious monuments were out of fashion. In 1900 his remark sounded fresh and simple as the green fields to ears that had heard a hundred years of other remarks, mostly no more fresh and certainly less simple. Without malice, one might find it more instructive than a whole lecture of Ruskin. One sees what one brings, and at that moment Gibbon brought the French ⁴⁰ Revolution. Ruskin brought reaction against the Revolution. St. Gaudens had passed beyond all. He liked the stately monuments much more than he liked Gibbon or Ruskin; he loved their dignity; their unity; their scale; their lines; their lights and shadows; their decorative sculpture; but he was even less con-

scious than they of the force that created it all—the Virgin, the Woman—by whose genius "the stately monuments of superstition" were built, through which she was expressed. He would have seen more meaning in Isis ⁶³ with the cow's horns, at Edfoo, who expressed the same thought. The art remained, but the energy was lost even upon the artist.

Yet in mind and person St. Gaudens was a survival of the 1500; he bore the stamp of the Renaissance, ¹⁰ and should have carried an image of the Virgin round his neck, or stuck in his hat, like Louis XI. ⁶⁴ In mere time he was a lost soul that had strayed by chance into the twentieth century, and forgotten where it came from. He writhed and cursed at his ignorance, much as Adams did at his own, but in the opposite sense. St. Gaudens was a child of Benvenuto Cellini, ⁶⁵ smothered in an American cradle. Adams was a quintessence of Boston, devoured by curiosity to think like Benvenuto. St. Gaudens's art was starved from birth, and Adams's instinct was blighted from babyhood. Each had but half of a nature, and when they came together before the Virgin of Amiens they ought both to have felt in her the force that made them one; but it was not so. To Adams she became more than ever a channel of force; to St. Gaudens she remained as before a channel of taste.

For a symbol of power, St. Gaudens instinctively preferred the horse, as was plain in his horse and Victory of the Sherman monument. Doubtless Sherman also felt it so. The attitude was so American that, for at least forty years, Adams had never realized that any other could be in sound taste. How many years had he taken to admit a notion of what Michael Angelo and Rubens were driving at? He could not say; but he knew that only since 1895 had he begun to feel the Virgin or Venus as force, and not everywhere even so. At Chartres—perhaps at Lourdes—possibly at Cnidos ⁶⁶ if one could still find there the divinely naked Aphrodite of Praxiteles—but otherwise one must look for force to the goddesses of Indian mythology. The idea died out long ago in the German and English stock. St. Gaudens at Amiens was hardly less sensitive to the force of the female

⁶³ Egyptian goddess of fertility—statue in Edfu, Upper Egypt, which Adams had visited.

⁶⁴ King of France from 1461 to 1483.

⁶⁵ Benvenuto Cellini (1500–71), Italian sculptor and worker in gold and silver.

⁶⁶ The Aphrodite of Praxiteles (fourth century B.C.) was placed in the temple at Cnidos (or Cnidus), now a ruined town on Cape Krio, southwest Asia Minor.

⁶¹ Wild, extravagant.

⁶² Edward Gibbon (1737–94) wrote *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

energy than Matthew Arnold at the Grande Chartreuse.⁶⁷ Neither of them felt goddesses as power—only as reflected emotion, human expression, beauty, purity, taste, scarcely even as sympathy. They felt a railway train as power, yet they, and all other artists, constantly complained that the power embodied in a railway train could never be embodied in art. All the steam in the world could not, like the Virgin, build Chartres.

Yet in mechanics, whatever the mechanicians might think, both energies acted as interchangeable forces on man, and by action on man all known force may be measured. Indeed, few men of science measured force in any other way. After once admitting that a straight line was the shortest distance between two points, no serious mathematician cared to deny anything that suited his convenience, and rejected no symbol, unproved or unproveable, that helped him to accomplish work. The symbol was force, as a compass-needle or a triangle was force, as the mechanist might prove by losing it, and nothing could be gained by ignoring their value. Symbol or energy, the Virgin had acted as the greatest force the Western world ever felt, and had drawn man's activities to herself more strongly than any other power, natural or supernatural, had ever done; the historian's business was to follow the track of the energy, to find where it came from and where it went to, its complex source and shifting channels, its values, equivalents, conversions. It could scarcely be more complex than radium, it could hardly be deflected, diverted, polarized, absorbed more perplexingly than other radiant matter. Adams knew nothing about any of them, but as a mathematical problem of influence on human progress, though all were occult, all reacted on his mind, and he rather inclined to think the Virgin easiest to handle.

⁶⁷ Arnold relates the incident in "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse."

The pursuit turned out to be long and tortuous, leading at last into the vast forests of scholastic science. From Zeno to Descartes, hand in hand with Thomas Aquinas, Montaigne, and Pascal, one stumbled as stupidly as though one were still a German student of 1860. Only with the instinct of despair could one force one's self into this old thicket of ignorance after having been repulsed at a score of entrances more promising and more popular. Thus far, no path had led anywhere, unless perhaps to an exceedingly modest living. Forty-five years of study had proved to be quite futile for the pursuit of power, one controlled no more force in 1900 than in 1850, although the amount of force controlled by society had enormously increased. The secret of education still hid itself somewhere behind ignorance, and one fumbled over it as feebly as ever. In such labyrinths, the staff is a force almost more necessary than the legs, the pen becomes a sort of blind-man's dog, to keep him from falling into the gutters. The pen works for itself, and acts like a hand, modelling the plastic material over and over again to the form that suits it best. The form is never arbitrary, but is a sort of growth like crystallization, as any artist knows too well, for often the pencil or pen runs into side-paths and shapelessness, loses its relations, stops or is bogged. Then it has to return on its trail, and recover, if it can, its line of force. The result of a year's work depends more on what is struck out than on what is left in, on the sequence of the main lines of thought, than on their play or variety. Compelled once more to lean heavily on this support, Adams covered more thousands of pages with figures as formal as though they were algebra, laboriously striking out, altering, burning, experimenting, until the year had expired, the Exposition had long been closed, and winter drawing to its end, before he sailed from Cherbourg, on January 19, 1901, for home.

STEPHEN CRANE (1871-1900)

At the public Library in Newark, New Jersey, a memorial tablet bears these words:

Inscribed to the memory of Stephen Crane, born in Newark, November 1, 1871. He attained, before his untimely death, June 5, 1900, international fame as a writer of fiction. His novel, "The Red Badge of Courage," set a model for succeeding writers on the emotions of men in battle. His verse and his delightful stories of boyhood anticipated strong later tendencies in American literature. The power of his work won for him the admiration of a wide circle of readers and critics.

Memorial inscriptions are often exaggerated, but this one unveiled November 7, 1921, made no claims not soon to be corroborated by many men of letters both in England and America, for the 1920's brought a revival and growth of Crane's literary reputation. Carl Van Doren, for example, stated in the first issue of a new magazine, *American Mercury* (January, 1924), that "modern American literature may be said, accurately enough, to have begun with Stephen Crane thirty years ago." By this time it was becoming apparent that Crane was modern in his "realism" (or, as some said, his "naturalism") as well as in the quality of his writing; he not only anticipated writers like Dreiser, Anderson, and Hemingway, but to a large extent he created a style for them. Thus the works of Crane, written in the final years of the nineteenth century, afford a convenient and proper starting point for the study of twentieth-century American literature.

Stephen Crane was the fourteenth child of the Reverend Jonathan Townley Crane, D.D., pastor of the Central Methodist Church in Newark, New Jersey. He was named for an ancestor who had signed the Declaration of Independence and served in the Continental Congress. The Reverend Jonathan Crane, originally Presbyterian, had revolted at the doctrine of infant damnation while a student at Princeton and had found, he thought, a more humane theology in the Methodist Church. Stephen's mother, Mary Helen Peck, the daughter and sister of Methodist ministers, was a fitting wife for her ministerial husband. Her youngest son wrote of her:

My mother was a very religious woman but I don't think that she was as narrow as most of her friends or her family.

... After my father died, mother lived in and for religion. We had very little money. Mother wrote articles for Methodist papers and reported for the (*New York Tribune*) and the (*Philadelphia Press*). . . . My brother Will used to try to argue with her on religious subjects such as hell but he always gave it up. Don't understand that mother was bitter or mean but it hurt her that any of us should be slipping from Grace and giving up eternal damnation or salvation or those things.

Even as a child Stephen's health was precarious, and his parents watched over him anxiously. He suffered from frequent colds, and his father would leave his study, and sometimes even his pulpit, to nurse him. This slight, blond boy was the pet of the family. But his mother taught him to endure pain or disappointment without crying and to rely upon his own strength and courage. His brothers took him swimming and marveled that he seemed to have no sense of fear. In 1879 Dr. Crane, thinking that the inland climate might be better than coastal New Jersey for Stephen's health, secured an appointment to a church at Port Jervis, New York.

In this pleasant town beside the Delaware River Stephen began his first attendance at school, roamed the countryside with his brothers, and grew rosy-checked. But this happiness was interrupted the following year when his father suddenly caught pneumonia and died. Mrs. Crane, almost without resources, experienced great difficulty in supporting her large family, which she moved back to New Jersey, then returned to Port Jervis, and in 1882 settled at Asbury Park, New Jersey, where Stephen attended school for the next six years. He learned easily and did well in every subject except mathematics, though he probably cared more for outdoor activities than books—he was passionately fond of horseback riding all his life. But he was also reading, observing, and storing up memories. The Civil War especially interested him. He read about it, heard veterans talk of it, and was impressed by their realistic, unglorified accounts. In 1883 he saw a white girl stabbed by her Negro lover, and he pedaled his bicycle away in terror, but refrained from mentioning the experience to his mother. Mrs. Crane herself was busy fighting vice (such as selling alcohol to schoolboys) and at-

tending religious conventions. She had many lecture engagements, too, and Stephen remembered her strong, rich voice and dignified bearing. She always spoke impromptu, words never failing her. Asbury Park was becoming an important summer resort, and her son Townley established a news bureau for "Shore News." In the summer of 1888 he employed his youngest brother to interview new arrivals and report the social news.

In January, 1888, Stephen Crane registered in the preparatory department of Claverack College and Hudson River Institute, three miles from Hudson, New York, a combined preparatory school and college of respected reputation. The school had been founded in 1854 and flourished until the end of the century. During Crane's two and a half year attendance, students were enrolled from fourteen states and several foreign countries. One of its publicized features was its military training, to promote "an erect carriage and dignified bearing, quickness and promptness of movement besides being an agreeable and health-giving exercise." In later years Crane, who never respected formal education, remembered that he was awkward at military drill, but the record indicates otherwise, for in 1890 he had become first lieutenant of the company that won first prize in the annual parade, and at the end of the year he was promoted to the rank of captain. More important than his military proficiency, this record also indicates his leadership. He distinguished himself still more, however, in baseball, the school magazine reporting that "Crane, catcher, was tendered the office of captain," though for some reason he declined. Some of his own writing was published in this school magazine, called *Vidette*, and its simplicity and clarity plainly foreshadowed his mature style.

In the fall of 1890 Crane entered Lafayette College, at Easton, Pennsylvania, instead of returning to Claverack College. He remained at Lafayette, however, only one term, and the records for his residence there are meager. We do know that he played baseball, joined a fraternity, and was taking a scientific course. There is also a record of his grades for this term: algebra 60, French 88, elocution 92, and theme writing 0. A fellow student remembered an attempt to haze Freshman Crane. For some reason (possibly his grades) he transferred in January, 1891, to Syracuse University, then a Methodist institution. He registered, as at Lafayette, for a scientific course, but soon changed, with his mother's permission, to *belles-lettres*. His main ambition was now to become a writer, and he was already, in a small way, a journalist, for he was the Syracuse correspondent for the

New York *Tribune*, wrote special articles for the Detroit *Free Press*, and did some reporting for the local newspaper office.

At Syracuse, Crane was an erratic student, for he seemed to be happy only when playing baseball, at which he starred, and was elected captain of the team. He is said to have shocked the faculty by saying that he disagreed with St. Paul's theory of sin and refused to meet Miss Frances E. Willard, ardent reformer and prohibitionist, at the home of one of the professors. His mother wrote him to be good, independent, and honest, and he at least followed two-thirds of the advice. Independence and honesty became, in fact, two guiding principles of his life. American writers of the day he called insincere, and according to his biographer he preferred Tolstoy to any other contemporary abroad. Perhaps his mother's simple Christianity influenced his evolving literary theory and taste more than he realized. Suddenly in the spring his mother died after attending a woman's congress in Boston, and in June Stephen turned his back on college forever. Perhaps he did not desire to be a financial burden to his brothers, but, with his impatient and independent spirit, he probably realized by this time that no college could help him to become the kind of writer he wanted to be.

In the fall, after Crane left Syracuse, he experienced his first and perhaps his only love affair. Somewhere he met a tall, attractive brunette, Helen Trent, an unsuccessful singer trained in Europe but then living in New York as a companion to an invalid lady of means. In his off-hours of erratic reporting for various newspapers he frequently visited her or wrote her brief notes. She was already engaged and was alarmed by the emotions and the ideas of this precocious nineteen-year-old boy, but she also found a certain fascination in his shocking talk, and she postponed telling him of her engagement. Probably, too, he desperately needed someone to whom he could pour out his thoughts and ambitions. He said the Bowery was the most interesting place in the world, and Miss Trent lectured him on going into such naughty places. She was astonished also that he thought a Negro could be handsome, that he pronounced American religion "mildewed," that Buddhism interested him, and that he believed it was all right for a certain actress with a cottage on the New Jersey beach to go swimming at dawn without a bathing suit. After a hansom ride on Fifth Avenue with Miss Trent, he wrote her

You have the most beautiful arms I ever saw. You never should have to wear dresses with sleeves. If I could keep your arms nothing else would count. It would not matter

if there was nothing else to hope for in the world or if there was no more world. In dreams, don't you ever fall and fall but not be afraid of anything because somebody safe is with you? I shall be here tomorrow. I must get back to Ed's [his brother's] house now.

When he called the next day, Miss Trent told him that she was soon to be married in London. Crane gasped, wheeled, and left. But the love poems in *The Black Riders* testify to the importance of this frustrated romance. One poem, especially, reveals his tragic feeling:

Should the wide world roll away,
Leaving black terror,
Limitless night,
Nor God, nor man, nor place to stand
Would be to me essential,
If thou and thy white arms were there,
And the fall to doom a long way.

It would be a mistake, however, to attribute Crane's knowledge of terror and doom entirely to frustration in love. During that autumn of 1891 he was making such a clinical study of life in the Bowery as Zola was advocating in his essay on "The Experimental Novel." These observations made Crane something of a determinist before the word became popular in literary circles. Shortly before Christmas, according to his own account, he finished a short novel about the sordid life of a girl in the Bowery. It is the story of a drunken mother, a son brutalized by his environment, and a pretty daughter early seduced, then driven into the streets by her mother and thus forced into suicide. The book ends ironically with the mother's crying "I'll fergive her!" after hearing of her daughter's death in the river. In the original version the characters were not named; they were merely types of humanity left derelict on the stream of a thoughtless society, but Crane finally named the story *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. He had no other purpose in writing it, he said, "than to show people to people as they seem to me." But no publisher would touch it. Richard Watson Gilder read the manuscript and began criticizing the grammar. "You mean that the story's too honest?" Crane asked, and Gilder truthfully agreed. Finally Crane borrowed money to print it himself. He asked his brother what was the stupidest name he could think of, and he replied Johnson or Smith; so Crane used the pseudonym of "Johnston Smith." Eleven hundred copies in paper covers were delivered to him, and the book was priced at fifty cents. By January, 1893, only a hundred copies had been sold, and the critics had ignored the work. In February Crane lost his position with the *Tribune*, and he attempted to

support himself by free-lancing. That year he nearly starved, but finally *Maggie* came to the attention of Hamlin Garland, who liked it so well that he sent a copy to William Dean Howells and helped Crane sell some sketches to the *Arena*. Howells was equally enthusiastic and began trying to find a publisher. He invited Crane to dinner and read Emily Dickinson to him.

To be appreciated by the critic who had first praised Tolstoy in America and had defended Zola was perhaps stimulating, if not remunerative, for Crane began almost immediately to read everything he could find on the Civil War in preparation for a new story. He came to feel, however, that nothing of any value had been written on the subject. He knew Zola's *La Débâcle*, and possibly may have derived unconscious hints from it, but what he was mainly interested in was the emotions of an average man during the horrors of war, and he had to rely upon his knowledge of human nature and his own imagination. He called the book ironically *The Red Badge of Courage*, but it was more about fear than courage. Henry Fleming, a farm boy plunged into battle with no experience or faith to guide him, is hero and coward by turns, but Crane presents him without credit for either. He is merely a bundle of human sensitivity stumbling through experience as best he can. But Crane described the emotions so convincingly that the story became a sensation. He sold it for less than a hundred dollars to Irving Bacheller's Syndicate, and it was printed in convenient installments for the *Philadelphia Press*, then mailed to other newspapers. When Crane visited the *Press* office the printers, some of them war veterans, crowded around to congratulate him, and letters of praise came in from all parts of the country.

On the basis of the newspaper success of *The Red Badge* before book publication, Bacheller employed Crane to make a trip to Mexico by way of the Western states to collect material for stories and sketches. Crane's visit to Chicago was spoiled by meeting children on the street dressed like Little Lord Fauntleroy, a fad started a few years earlier by Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett in her famous book for children. Always a foe of sentimentality, Crane particularly hated *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. One of his favorite books was *Life on the Mississippi*, which he thought Mark Twain's best, and he was eager to see the great river. In Lincoln, Nebraska, he tried to stop a fight, suffered from a blizzard, and got an idea for a story from the sight of a hotel painted a revolting shade of blue. He was disappointed in New Orleans, perhaps because the food gave him indigestion, but he loved

San Antonio and Texas in general (Miss Willa Cather thought his Texas story, "The Bude Comes to Yellow Sky," one of his best.) But if he loved Texas, he adored Mexico. There he was chased by bandits, much as he has described in "Horses—One Dash," and met exciting characters like the 'Frisco Kid and the New York Kid of "The Five White Mice." These stories owe something to the synthetic glamour of Western romance, but they are always original in the point of view, the impressionistic imagery, and the deliberately flat ending: the prospective gun-battle terminates in anticlimax, the tourist thinks he is facing death but suddenly finds himself safe. The Swede does get himself killed in "Blue Hotel" but not because the cowboy, the saloon-keeper, or the gambler wants to fight. Crane's endings are the antithesis of O. Henry's, as commonplace as average life, but framed in the author's ironic detachment.

Appleton bought *The Red Badge* while it was being syndicated, but Crane's travels delayed the publication of the book until October 3, 1895. Within a few months it had become a "best-seller," though at first England seemed more enthusiastic than America. H. G. Wells remembers that *The Red Badge* came as "a record of an intensity beyond all precedent," and Ford Madox Ford says, "One awakened one morning in the nineties in England and *The Red Badge of Courage* was not, by noon of the same day it filled the universe. There was nothing you could talk of but that book. And by tea-time, as it were, this hot blast of fame had swept back across the Atlantic and there was nothing they could talk of in New York and its hinterlands but that book."

Even though we grant that the story was, and is, a masterpiece, the excitement it created may have been due to some extent to the fear of war throughout the world during the closing years of the nineteenth century. National rivalries and frictions were increasing, and there was threat of war on every continent. Perhaps the common man in many a country was wondering how he would stand the test of actual battle, and in Henry Fleming, who doubted his own courage, the average man may have unconsciously found a reflection of himself. Fleming learned, too, that he could not judge others by their words, reality he could experience only in himself. This fundamental truth about human nature was not prevalent in fiction before Crane. And he was in no way more modern, more apperceptive, than in his repeated attempts in his writings to explore the reality concealed by verbal habits. In the disintegration of cultural patterns and the withering of communal faith man

was becoming lost in his own intellect, an easy prey for degenerating doubt and withering scepticism. Crane had no remedies for these social and psychological diseases, but with clinical efficiency he searched out and recorded the symptoms.

When he explored his own inner experience, however, as he did in his first book of poems, *The Black Riders* (1895), he revealed a state of mind which the average man could not understand. In fact, few men or women anywhere could. Of course Garland, to whom the book was dedicated, was an exception, and so was Howells, but the public, which still admired Longfellow and was just then enchanted with Fitzgerald's rendering of Omar Khayyam, could find neither poetry nor sense in Crane's free verse lines packed with dissonance and satirical disenchantment. Perhaps they were like the man in the poet's vision:

I saw a man pursuing the horizon;
Round and round they sped.
I was disturbed at this,
I accosted the man
"It is futile," I said,
"You can never—"
"You lie," he cried,
And ran on.

In mood and epigrammatic style these poems resemble the lines of Emily Dickinson more than any other nineteenth-century poet, but the imagery (though not of the sample quoted above) reminded a few critics of French symbolism. When asked if he admired Stéphane Mallarmé, Crane replied, "I don't read much about Irish authors." Indeed, his poems were about as little derivative as any verse could be, but they anticipated "imagism" and much of the best American free verse. *War Is Kind* (1899) showed considerable development in rhythm and phrasing, and the two books entitled Crane to serious consideration as an important poet, but his fiction still outweighs his verse in popularity. One of the central themes in his poetry, the strength of the gods in contrast to the puny weakness of man, links him with Thomas Hardy. It is also significant that one of his warmest admirers in England was Joseph Conrad, who was equally appreciative of the sorry plight of man in a disinterested universe.

Since Crane had won his success with a war story, both he and the public seemed to expect him to rush to every battlefield that presented itself during the blustery end of the nineteenth century. In the fall of 1896 "filibustering" ships were secretly carrying munitions to revolutionary forces in Cuba. William Randolph Hearst engaged Crane as correspondent for

the New York *Journal*, and Crane boarded a dilapidated ship in Florida. Wrecked off the Florida coast, he and three members of the crew rowed for several days and nights—an experience unforgettably described in a story called “The Open Boat.” But Crane’s health, never robust under favorable conditions, was, in the opinion of his brother William, permanently injured, and his experiences the following spring certainly did not improve it. In March he wrote to his brother:

I have been for over a month among the swamps further South [of Jacksonville], wading miserably to and fro in an attempt to avoid our dented U. S. Navy. It can’t be done. I am through trying. I have changed my plans and am going to Crete.

The *Journal* agreed to this shift in Crane’s plans and accordingly employed him to report the Graeco-Turkish war, already in progress. He went by way of England, where he secured another contract to write for the *Westminster Gazette*, was lionized in British literary circles—though he antagonized some by his acid comments on R. L. Stevenson, then quite the rage—and tried in France to pick up enough French to help him report the war in Greece. He seemed to be shocked to discover that this fracas was being carried on in foreign tongues. From Switzerland he wrote:

I now know that I am an imbecile of rank. If nobody shoots me and I get back alive through those Indians in London I will stay home until there is a nicer war in Mexico where it does not matter what you talk so long as you can curse immoderately. Willie Hearst has made a bad bargain.

That it was, indeed, a bad bargain became more apparent in Greece, where he declared disgustedly that observing the war was “like trying to see a bum vaudeville show from behind a fat man who wiggles.” Out of his experiences, however, he did write one superb sketch, “Death and the Child,” told from the point of view of an infant watching with incomprehension from a hill the bloody fighting in the valley below. In Athens Crane was ill with dysentery, then married his nurse, Cora Taylor, an attractive woman, several years older than himself, whom he had met in Jacksonville. She had fallen in love with him, perhaps in a maternal way, and had followed him to Greece. There are no indications that Crane ever loved her as he thought he did Helen Trent, but he was devoted to her in his own way, and he could not have found a more loyal wife. They returned to England, where they made their home in a picturesque old town, Limpsfield, in Surrey, near London. There they reck-

lessly entertained friends and spongers alike. Among their friends were Rupert Brooke, Robert Bridges, Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, and Henry James, who lived only a few miles away.

When the Spanish-American war finally began, Crane could hardly wait to report it. Upon arriving in New York, he was employed by the *Journal* and the *World*. He visited the troops in Guantanamo, Santiago, Havana, and Puerto Rico. Half crazed with fatigue and fever, he took unnecessary risks, and his companions thought he was trying to get himself killed. Of course under these conditions the reporter could not do his best work, and he returned to New York a broken man. He seemed not to care what happened to him and delayed rejoining his wife in England, but finally he did go back and was temporarily revived by his many loyal English friends. He rented an old manor house, repaired a few rooms so that he and his wife and his many dogs could live in them, and once more settled down to work. He employed a man to take care of his favorite horses, Hengist and Horsa, took daily rides, and was perhaps the happiest he had ever been. Even after hemorrhages of the lungs warned him that his remaining days were limited, his friends found him cheerful, though pressed for money and having to drive himself to turn out the work he did. On New Year’s Eve, 1900, he gave a lavish party for his friends, who worried more about his health than he did. In May he was persuaded to go to the Black Forest, but in June he passed quietly away at night, several months short of his thirtieth birthday. Many stories had been circulated about him before his death, and they continued afterward, delaying for many years an appreciation of his genius in America. Gossipers whispered that he drank too much, smoked too much, that he used morphine. His biographers attribute most of these stories to jealousy and malice and to the fact that he was indifferent to public opinion and often said things which could be misunderstood. Illness and fatigue, of course, also gave him a dissipated appearance. But the friends who knew him best thought him one of the kindest, most generous and sincere men they had ever known.

Of one excess he was guilty: he wrote too many books, and the quality of his writing suffered as a consequence. But he seemed to have a premonition that he would not have many years in which to write, and he drove himself without mercy. Some of his later works, however, are almost as good in their own way as anything he wrote. *The Third Violet*, a study of lovers unable to probe beneath the words which conceal their real emotions for each other, is a psycho-

logical achievement *The Monster*, the story of a small-town physician's loyalty to a Negro who was horribly disfigured while saving his employer's small son, was the most penetrating revelation of small-town bigotry and inhumanity before *Main Street*. And the *Whilomville Stories* (1900) should be known as classics in the literature on childhood. They were, in fact, probably the most truthful accounts of child psychology that had ever been presented in fiction, surpassing the better known efforts of Mark Twain and

Booth Tarkington in truthfulness. But, as with all Crane's best efforts, these simple narratives have a deeper meaning as one critic has noticed, underneath the comedy of children playing at life is the cruel tragedy of tribalism. Crane's fictitious characters mirror not the smiling face of social life in the "gay nineties" but the hidden fears secretly gnawing at the vitals of the supposedly civilized people. By his uncompromising realism he was unconsciously prophetic of the "blood-baths" of the twentieth century.

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FROM

*The Black Riders and Other Lines*¹

I

Black riders came from the sea.
There was clang and clang of spear and shield,
And clash and clash of hoof and heel,
Wild shouts and the wave of hair
In the rush upon the wind.
Thus the ride of Sin

III

In the desert
I saw a creature, naked, bestial,

¹ Reprinted from *The Collected Poems of Stephen Crane*, by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright 1922 by William A. Crane.

Who, squatting upon the ground,
Held his heart in his hands,
And ate of it.
I said, "Is it good, friend?"
"It is bitter—bitter," he answered;
"But I like it
Because it is bitter,
And because it is my heart."

10

V

Once there came a man
Who said,
"Range me all men of the world in rows."
And instantly

There was terrific clamour among the people
 Against being ranged in rows.
 There was a loud quarrel, world-wide.
 It endured for ages;
 And blood was shed
 By those who would not stand in rows,
 And by those who pined to stand in rows.
 Eventually, the man went to death, weeping.
 And those who stayed in bloody scuffle
 Knew not the great simplicity.

VI

God fashioned the ship of the world carefully.
 With the infinite skill of an All-Master
 Made He the hull and the sails,
 Held He the rudder
 Ready for adjustment.
 Erect stood He, scanning His work proudly.
 Then—at fateful time—a wrong called,
 And God turned, heeding.
 Lo, the ship, at this opportunity, slipped slyly,
 Making cunning noiseless travel down the ways. 10
 So that, for ever rudderless, it went upon the seas
 Going ridiculous voyages,
 Making quaint progress,
 Turning as with serious purpose
 Before stupid winds.
 And there were many in the sky
 Who laughed at this thing.

X

Should the wide world roll away,
 Leaving black terror,
 Limitless night,
 Nor God, nor man, nor place to stand
 Would be to me essential,
 If thou and thy white arms were there,
 And the fall to doom a long way.

XII

*"And the sins of the fathers shall be visited
 upon the heads of the children, even unto the
 third and fourth generation of them that hate
 me." 2*

Well, then, I hate Thee, unrighteous picture;
 Wicked image, I hate Thee;
 So, strike with Thy vengeance
 The heads of those little men
 Who come blindly.
 It will be a brave thing.

² Exodus x:4-6.

XIV

There was crimson clash of war.
 Lands turned black and bare;
 Women wept;
 10 Babes ran, wondering.
 There came one who understood not these things
 He said, "Why is this?"
 Whereupon a million strove to answer him.
 There was such intricate clamour of tongues
 That still the reason was not.

XXI

There was, before me,
 Mile upon mile
 Of snow, ice, burning sand.
 And yet I could look beyond all this,
 To a place of infinite beauty;
 And I could see the loveliness of her
 Who walked in the shade of the trees.
 When I gazed,
 10 All was lost
 But this place of beauty and her.
 When I gazed,
 And in my gazing, desired,
 Then came again
 Mile upon mile
 Of snow, ice, burning sand.

XXIII

Places among the stars,
 Soft gardens near the sun,
 Keep your distant beauty;
 Shed no beams upon my weak heart.
 Since she is here
 In a place of blackness,
 Not your golden days
 Nor your silver nights
 Can call me to you.
 Since she is here
 10 In a place of blackness,
 Here I stay and wait.

XXIV

I saw a man pursuing the horizon;
 Round and round they sped.
 I was disturbed at this;
 I accosted the man.
 "It is futile," I said,
 "You can never—"

"You lie," he cried,
And ran on

XXVIII

"Truth," said a traveller,
"Is a rock, a mighty fortress,
Often have I been to it,
Even to its highest tower,
From whence the world looks black "

"Truth," said a traveller,
"Is a breath, a wind,
A shadow, a phantom,
Long have I pursued it,
But never have I touched
The hem of its garment "

And I believed the second traveller,
For truth was to me
A breath, a wind,
A shadow, a phantom,
And never had I touched
The hem of its garment

XXIX

Behold, from the land of the farther suns
I returned.
And I was in a reptile-swarming place,
Peopled, otherwise, with grimaces,
Shrouded above in black impenetrableness
I shrink, loathing,
Sick with it
And I said to Him,
"What is this?"
He made answer slowly,
"Spirit, this is a world,
This was your home."

XXXVIII

The ocean said to me once,
"Look!
Yonder on the shore
Is a woman, weeping.
I have watched her
Go you and tell her this—
Her lover I have laid
In cool green hall
There is wealth of golden sand
And pillars, coral-red;
Two white fish stand guard at his bier.

"Tell her this
And more—
That the king of the seas
Weeps too, old, helpless man
The bustling fates
Heap his hands with corpses
Until he stands like a child
With surplus of toys "

XLVI

Many red devils ran from my heart
And out upon the page
They were so tiny
The pen could mash them
10 And many struggled in the ink
It was strange
To write in this red muck
Of things from my heart

XLIX

I stood musing in a black world,
Not knowing where to direct my feet.
And I saw the quick stream of men
Pouring ceaselessly,
Filled with eager faces,
A torrent of desire
I called to them,
"Where do you go? what do you see?"
A thousand voices called to me
A thousand fingers pointed
10 "Look! look! There!"

I know not of it
But, lo! in the far sky shone a radiance
10 Ineffable, divine—
A vision painted upon a pall,
And sometimes it was,
And sometimes it was not
I hesitated.
Then from the stream
Came roaring voices,
Impatient.
Look! look! There!"

So again I saw,
And leaped, unhesitant,
And struggled and fumed
With outspread clutching fingers
10 The hard hills tore my flesh,
The ways bit my feet

At last I looked again.
 No radiance in the far sky,
 Ineffable, diyine;
 No vision painted upon a pall;
 And always my eyes ached for the light.
 Then I cried in despair,
 "I see nothing! Oh, where do I go?"
 The torrent turned again its faces:
 "Look! look! There!"

And at the blindness of my spirit
 They screamed,
 "Fool! fool! fool!"

LIV

"It was wrong to do this," said the angel.
 "You should live like a flower,

30 Holding malice like a puppy,
 Waging war like a lambkin."
 "Not so," quoth the man
 Who had no fear of spirits;
 "It is only wrong for angels
 Who can live like the flowers,
 Holding malice like the puppies,
 Waging was like the lambkins."

10

LXVI

40 If I should cast off this tattered coat,
 And go free into the mighty sky;
 If I should find nothing there
 But a vast blue,
 Echoless, ignorant—
 What then?

FROM

*War Is Kind and Other Lines*³

I

Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind.
 Because your lover threw wild hands toward the
 sky
 And the affrighted steed ran on alone,
 Do not weep.
 War is kind.

Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment,
 Little souls who thirst for fight,
 These men were born to drill and die.
 The unexplained glory flies above them,
 Great is the battle-god, great, and his
 kingdom—

A field where a thousand corpses lie.

Do not weep, babe, for war is kind.
 Because your father tumbled in the yellow
 trenches,
 Raged at his breast, gulped and died,
 Do not weep.
 War is kind.

Swift blazing flag of the regiment,
 Eagle with crest of red and gold,

These men were born to drill and die.
 Point for them the virtue of slaughter,
 Make plain to them the excellence of killing
 And a field where a thousand corpses lie.

Mother whose heart hung humble as a button
 On the bright splendid shroud of your son,
 Do not weep.
 War is kind.

XII

10 A newspaper is a collection of half-injustices
 Which, bawled by boys from mile to mile,
 Spreads its curious opinion
 To a million merciful and sneering men,
 While families cuddle the joys of the fireside
 When spurred by tale of dire lone agony.
 A newspaper is a court
 Where every one is kindly and unfairly tried
 By a squalor of honest men.
 A newspaper is a market
 Where wisdom sells its freedom
 And melons are crowned by the crowd.
 A newspaper is a game
 Where his error scores the player victory
 While another's skill wins death.

10

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A newspaper is a symbol,
It is feckless life's chronicle,
A collection of loud tales
Concentrating eternal stupidities,
That in remote ages lived unaltered,
Roaming through a fenceless world

XVIII

In the night
Grey heavy clouds muffled the valleys,
And the peaks looked toward God alone
"O Master that movest the wind with a finger,
Humble, idle, futile peaks are we
Grant that we may run swiftly across the world
To huddle in worship at Thy feet"

In the morning
A noise of men at work came the clear blue
miles,
And the little black cities were apparent
"O Master that knowest the meaning of
raindrops,
Humble, idle, futile peaks are we
Give voice to us, we pray, O Lord,
That we may sing Thy goodness to the sun"

In the evening
The far valleys were sprinkled with tiny lights
"O Master,
Thou that knowest the value of kings and
birds,
Thou hast made us humble, idle, futile peaks
Thou only needest eternal patience,
We bow to Thy wisdom, O Lord—
Humble, idle, futile peaks"

In the night
Grey heavy clouds muffled the valleys,
And the peaks looked toward God alone.

XXI

A man said to the universe:
"Sir, I exist!"
"However," replied the universe,
"The fact has not created in me
A sense of obligation."

XXIII

There was a land where lived no violets
A traveller at once demanded "Why?"
The people told him
20 "Once the violets of this place spoke thus
'Until some woman freely gives her lover
To another woman
We will fight in bloody scuffle.'"
Sadly the people added
"There are no violets here"

XXVII

When a people reach the top of a hill,
'Then does God lean toward them,
Shortens tongues and lengthens arms
A vision of their dead comes to the weak
'The moon shall not be too old
Before the new battalions rise,
Blue battalions
10 The moon shall not be too old
When the children of change shall fall
Before the new battalions,
10 The blue battalions

Mistakes and virtues will be trampled deep.
A church and a thief shall fall together
A sword will come at the bidding of the cycless,
'The God-led, turning only to beckon,
Swinging a creed like a censer
At the head of the new battalions,
Blue battalions
March the tools of nature's impulse,
Men born of wrong, men born of right,
20 Men of the new battalions,
The blue battalions.

The clang of swords is Thy wisdom,
The wounded make gestures like Thy Son's,
The feet of mad horses is one part—
Ay, another is the hand of a mother on the
brow of a youth
Then, swift as they charge through a shadow,
The men of the new battalions,
Blue battalions—
God lead them high, God lead them far,
30 God lead them far, God lead them high,
These new battalions,
The blue battalions.

*The Open Boat*⁴

A TALE INTENDED TO BE AFTER THE FACT:
BEING THE EXPERIENCE OF FOUR MEN FROM THE SUNK STEAMER "COMMODORE"

I

None of them knew the colour of the sky. Their eyes glanced level, and were fastened upon the waves that swept toward them. These waves were of the hue of slate, save for the tops, which were of foaming white, and all of the men knew the colours of the sea. The horizon narrowed and widened, and dipped and rose, and at all times its edge was jagged with waves that seemed thrust up in points like rocks.

Many a man ought to have a bathtub larger than the boat which here rode upon the sea. These waves were most wrongfully and barbarously abrupt and tall, and each froth-top was a problem in small-boat navigation.

The cook squatted in the bottom, and looked with both eyes at the six inches of gunwale which separated him from the ocean. His sleeves were rolled over his fat forearms, and the two flaps of his unbuttoned vest dangled as he bent to bail out the boat. 20 Often he said, "Gawd! that was a narrow clip." As he remarked it he invariably gazed eastward over the broken sea.

The oiler, steering with one of the two oars in the boat, sometimes raised himself suddenly to keep clear of water that swirled in over the stern. It was a thin little oar, and it seemed often ready to snap.

The correspondent, pulling at the other oar, watched the waves and wondered why he was there.

The injured captain, lying in the bow, was at this time buried in that profound dejection and indifference which comes, temporarily at least, to even the bravest and most enduring when, willy-nilly, the firm fails, the army loses, the ship goes down. The mind

⁴ Reprinted from *Twenty Stories* by Stephen Crane, by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright 1925 by William H. Crane.

This story, published in *Scribner's Magazine*, June, 1897, and reprinted in 1898 in book form, was based on an actual experience which befell Crane during the filibustering preceding the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. He had gone to Florida in 1896 to report the filibustering activities and late in the year left Jacksonville on a small steamer, scarcely seaworthy, heavily loaded with munitions for the insurrectionists in Cuba. When the ship sank, Crane escaped in the last boat with the captain, the cook, and the oiler. "The Open Boat" is, therefore, not fiction but brilliant reporting.

of the master of a vessel is rooted deep in the timbers of her, though he command for a day or a decade; and this captain had on him the stern impression of a scene in the greys of dawn of seven turned faces, and later a stump of a top-mast with a white ball on it, that slashed to and fro at the waves, went low and lower, and down. Thereafter there was something strange in his voice. Although steady, it was deep with mourning, and of a quality beyond oration 10 or tears.

"Keep 'er a little more south, Billie," said he.

"A little more south, sir," said the oiler in the stern.

A seat in his boat was not unlike a seat upon a bucking broncho, and by the same token a broncho is not much smaller. The craft pranced and reared and plunged like an animal. As each wave came, and she rose for it, she seemed like a horse making at a fence outrageously high. The manner of her scramble over these walls of water is a mystic thing, and, moreover, at the top of them were ordinarily these problems in white water, the foam racing down from the summit of each wave requiring a new leap, and a leap from the air. Then, after scornfully bumping a crest, she would slide and race and splash down a long incline, and arrive bobbing and nodding in front of the next menace.

A singular disadvantage of the sea lies in the fact that after successfully surmounting one wave you discover that there is another behind it just as important and just as nervously anxious to do something effective in the way of swamping boats. In a ten-foot dinghy one can get an idea of the resources of the sea in the line of waves that is not probable to the average experience which is never at sea in a dinghy. As each slaty wall of water approached, it shut all else from the view of the men in the boat, and it was not difficult to imagine that this particular wave was the final outburst of the ocean, the last 40 effort of the grim water. There was a terrible grace in the move of the waves, and they came in silence, save for the snarling of the crests.

In the wan light the faces of the men must have

been grey. Their eyes must have glistened in strange ways as they gazed steadily astern. Viewed from a balcony, the whole thing would doubtless have been weirdly picturesque. But the men in the boat had no time to see it, and if they had had leisure, there were other things to occupy their minds. The sun swung steadily up the sky, and they knew it was broad day because the colour of the sea changed from slate to emerald green streaked with amber lights, and the foam was like tumbling snow. The process of the breaking day was unknown to them. They were aware only of this effect upon the colour of the waves that rolled toward them.

In disjointed sentences the cook and the correspondent argued as to the difference between a life-saving station and a house of refuge. The cook had said: "There's a house of refuge just north of the Mosquito Inlet Light, and as soon as they see us they'll come off in their boat and pick us up."

"As soon as who see us?" said the correspondent. 20

"The crew," said the cook.

"Houses of refuge don't have crews," said the correspondent. "As I understand them, they are only places where clothes and grub are stored for the benefit of shipwrecked people. They don't carry crews."

"Oh, yes, they do," said the cook.

"No, they don't," said the correspondent.

"Well, we're not there yet, anyhow," said the oiler, in the stern.

"Well," said the cook, "perhaps it's not a house of refuge that I'm thinking of as being near Mosquito Inlet Light, perhaps it's a life-saving station."

"We're not there yet," said the oiler in the stern.

II

As the boat bounced from the top of each wave the wind tore through the hair of the hatless men, and as the craft plopped her stern down again the spray slashed past them. The crest of each of these 40 waves was a hill, from the top of which the men surveyed for a moment a broad tumultuous expanse, shining and wind-riven. It was probably splendid, it was probably glorious, this play of the free sea, wild with lights of emerald and white and amber.

"Bully good thing it's an on-shore wind," said the cook. "If not, where would we be? Wouldn't have a show?"

"That's right," said the correspondent.

The busy oiler nodded his assent.

Then the captain, in the bow, chuckled in a way that expressed humour, contempt, tragedy, all in one. "Do you think we've got much of a show now, boys?" said he.

Whereupon the three were silent, save for a trifle of hemming and hawing. To express any particular optimism at this time they felt to be childish and stupid, but they all doubtless possessed this sense of the situation in their minds. A young man thinks doggedly at such times. On the other hand, the ethics of their condition was decidedly against any open suggestion of hopelessness. So they were silent.

"Oh, well," said the captain, soothing his children, "we'll get ashore all right."

But there was that in his tone which made them think, so the oiler quoth, "Yes! if this wind holds."

The cook was bailing. "Yes! if we don't catch hell in the surf."

Canton-flannel gulls flew near and far. Sometimes they sat down on the sea, near patches of brown seaweed that rolled over the waves with a movement like carpets on a line in a gale. The birds sat comfortably in groups, and they were envied by some in the dinghy, for the wrath of the sea was no more to them than it was to a covey of prairie chickens a thousand miles inland. Often they came very close and stared at the men with black bead-like eyes. At these times they were uncanny and sinister in their 30 unblinking scrutiny, and the men hooted angrily at them, telling them to be gone. One came, and evidently decided to alight on the top of the captain's head. The bird flew parallel to the boat and did not circle, but made short sidelong jumps in the air in chicken-fashion. His black eyes were wistfully fixed upon the captain's head. "Ugly brute," said the oiler to the bird. "You look as if you were made with a jackknife." The cook and the correspondent swore darkly at the creature. The captain naturally wished to knock it away with the end of the heavy painter, but he did not dare do it, because anything resembling an emphatic gesture would have capsized this freighted boat, and so, with his open hand, the captain gently and carefully waved the gull away. After it had been discouraged from the pursuit the captain breathed easier on account of his hair, and others breathed easier because the bird struck their minds at this time as being somehow gruesome and ominous.

In the meantime the oiler and the correspondent rowed. And also they rowed. They sat together in the same seat, and each rowed an oar. Then the oiler took both oars; then the correspondent took both oars; then the oiler; then the correspondent. They rowed and they rowed. The very ticklish part of the business was when the time came for the reclining one in the stern to take his turn at the oars. By the very last star of truth, it is easier to steal eggs from under a hen than it was to change seats in the dinghy. First the man in the stern slid his hand along the thwart and moved with care, as if he were of Sèvres. Then the man in the rowing-seat slid his hand along the other thwart. It was all done with the most extraordinary care. As the two sidled past each other, the whole party kept watchful eyes on the coming wave, and the captain cried: "Look out, now! Steady, there!"

The brown mats of seaweed that appeared from time to time were like islands, bits of earth. They were travelling, apparently, neither one way nor the other. They were, to all intents, stationary. They informed the men in the boat that it was making progress slowly toward the land.

The captain, rearing cautiously in the bow after the dinghy soared on a great swell, said that he had seen the lighthouse at Mosquito Inlet. Presently the cook remarked that he had seen it. The correspondent was at the oars then, and for some reason he too wished to look at the lighthouse; but his back was toward the far shore, and the waves were important, and for some time he could not seize an opportunity to turn his head. But at last there came a wave more gentle than the others, and when at the crest of it he swiftly scoured the western horizon.

"See it?" said the captain.

"No," said the correspondent, slowly; "I didn't see anything."

"Look again," said the captain. He pointed. "It's exactly in that direction."

At the top of another wave the correspondent did as he was bid, and this time his eyes chanced on a small, still thing on the edge of the swaying horizon. It was precisely like the point of a pin. It took an anxious eyes to find a lighthouse so tiny.

"Think we'll make it, Captain?"

"If this wind holds and the boat don't swamp, we can't do much else," said the captain.

The little boat, lifted by each towering sea and

splashed viciously by the crests, made progress that in the absence of seaweed was not apparent to those in her. She seemed just a wee thing wallowing, miraculously top up, at the mercy of five oceans. Occasionally a great spread of water, like white flames, swarmed into her.

"Bail her, cook," said the captain, serenely.

"All right, Captain," said the cheerful cook.

III

It would be difficult to describe the subtle brotherhood of men that was here established on the seas. No one said that it was so. No one mentioned it. But it dwelt in the boat, and each man felt it warm him. They were a captain, an oiler, a cook, and a correspondent, and they were friends—friends in a more curiously iron-bound degree than may be common. The hurt captain, lying against the water-jar in the bow, spoke always in a low voice and calmly; but he could never command a more ready and swiftly obedient crew than the motley three of the dinghy. It was more than a mere recognition of what was best for the common safety. There was surely in it a quality that was personal and heart-felt. And after this devotion to the commander of the boat, there was this comradeship, that the correspondent, for instance, who had been taught to be cynical of men, knew even at the time was the best experience of his life. But no one said that it was so. No one mentioned it.

"I wish we had a sail," remarked the captain. "We might try my overcoat on the end of an oar, and give you two boys a chance to rest." So the cook and the correspondent held the mast and spread wide the overcoat; the oiler steered; and the little boat made good way with her new rig. Sometimes the oiler had to scull sharply to keep a sea from breaking into the boat, but otherwise sailing was a success.

Meanwhile the lighthouse had been growing slowly larger. It had now almost assumed colour, and appeared like a little grey shadow on the sky. The man at the oars could not be prevented from turning his head rather often to try for a glimpse of this little grey shadow.

At last, from the top of each wave, the men in the tossing boat could see land. Even as the lighthouse was an upright shadow on the sky, this land seemed but a long black shadow on the sea. It certainly was thinner than paper. "We must be about oppo-

site New Smyrna," said the cook, who had coasted this shore often in schooners "Captain, by the way, I believe they abandoned that life-saving station there about a year ago."

"Did they?" said the captain

The wind slowly died away The cook and the correspondent were not now obliged to slave in order to hold high the oar But the waves continued their old impetuous swooping at the dinghy, and the little craft, no longer under way, struggled woundily over them The oiler or the correspondent took the oars again

Shipwrecks are apropos of nothing If men could only train for them and have them occur when the men had reached pink condition, there would be less drowning at sea Of the four in the dinghy none had slept any time worth mentioning for two days and two nights previous to embarking in the dinghy, and in the excitement of clambering about the deck of a foundering ship they had also forgotten to eat 20 heartily.

For these reasons, and for others, neither the oiler nor the correspondent was fond of rowing at this time. The correspondent wondered ingenuously how in the name of all that was sane could there be people who thought it amusing to row a boat It was not an amusement, it was a diabolical punishment, and even a genius of mental aberrations could never conclude that it was anything but a horror to the muscles and a crime against the back. He 30 mentioned to the boat in general how the amusement of rowing struck him, and the weary-faced oiler smiled in full sympathy. Previously to the foundering, by the way, the oiler had worked a double watch in the engine-room of the ship.

"Take her easy now, boys," said the captain "Don't spend yourselves If we have to run a surf you'll need all your strength, because we'll sure have to swim for it. Take your time."

Slowly the land arose from the sea. From a black 40 line it became a line of black and a line of white—trees and sand Finally the captain said that he could make out a house on the shore. "That's the house of refuge, sure," said the cook "They'll see us before long, and come out after us"

The distant lighthouse reared high "The keeper ought to be able to make us out now, if he's looking through a glass," said the captain. "He'll notify the life-saving people."

"None of those other boats could have got ashore to give word of this wreck," said the oiler, in a low voice, "else the life-boat would be out hunting us"

Slowly and beautifully the land loomed out of the sea The wind came again It had veered from the north-east to the south-east Finally a new sound struck the ears of the men in the boat It was the low thunder of the surf on the shore "We'll never be able to make the lighthouse now," said the captain "Swing her head a little more north, Billie"

"A little more north, sir," said the oiler

Whereupon the little boat turned her nose once more down the wind, and all but the oarsman watched the shore grow Under the influence of this expansion doubt and direful apprehension were leaving the minds of the men The management of the boat was still most absorbing, but it could not prevent a quiet cheerfulness In an hour, perhaps, they would be ashore.

Their backbones had become thoroughly used to balancing in the boat, and they now rode this wild colt of a dinghy like circus men The correspondent thought that he had been diened to the skin, but happening to feel in the top pocket of his coat, he found therein eight cigars Four of them were soaked with sea-water, four were perfectly scatheless. After a search, somebody produced three dry matches, and thereupon the four waifs rode unpudently in their little boat and, with an assurance of an impending 35 rescue shining in their eyes, puffed at the big cigars, and judged well and ill of all men Everybody took a drink of water.

IV

"Cook," remarked the captain, "there don't seem to be any signs of life about your house of refuge."

"No," replied the cook. "Funny they don't see us!"

A broad stretch of lowly coast lay before the eyes of the men It was of low dunes topped with dark vegetation. The roar of the surf was plain, and sometimes they could see the white lip of a wave as it spun up the beach. A tiny house was blocked out black upon the sky. Southward, the slim lighthouse lifted its little grey length

Tide, wind, and waves were swinging the dinghy northward "Funny they don't see us," said the men

The surf's roar was here dulled, but its tone was nevertheless thunderous and mighty As the boat

swam over the great rollers the men sat listening to this roar. "We'll swamp sure," said everybody.

It is fair to say here that there was not a life-saving station within twenty miles in either direction; but the men did not know this fact, and in consequence they made dark and opprobrious remarks concerning the eyesight of the nation's life-savers. Four scowling men sat in the dinghy and surpassed records in the invention of epithets.

"Funny they don't sec us."

The light-heartedness of a former time had completely faded. To their sharpened minds it was easy to conjure pictures of all kinds of incompetency and blindness and, indeed, cowardice. There was the shore of the populous land, and it was bitter and bitter to them that from it came no sign.

"Well," said the captain, ultimately, "I suppose we'll have to make a try for ourselves. If we stay out here too long, we'll none of us have strength left to swim after the boat swamps."

And so the oiler, who was at the oars, turned the boat straight for the shore. There was a sudden tightening of muscles. There was some thinking.

"If we don't all get ashore," said the captain—"if we don't all get ashore, I suppose you fellows know where to send news of my finish?"

They then briefly exchanged some addresses and admonitions. As for the reflections of the men, there was a great deal of rage in them. Perchance they might be formulated thus: "If I am going to be drowned—if I am going to be drowned—if I am going to be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees? Was I brought here merely to have my nose dragged away as I was about to nibble the sacred cheese of life? It is preposterous. If this old ninny-woman, Fate, cannot do better than this, she should be deprived of the management of men's fortunes. She is an old hen who knows not her intention. If she has decided to drown me, why did she not do it in the beginning and save me all this trouble? The whole affair is absurd.—But no; she cannot mean to drown me. She dare not drown me. She cannot drown me. Not after all this work." Afterward the man might have had an impulse to shake his fist at the clouds. "Just you drown me, now, and then hear what I call you!"

The billows that came at this time were more

formidable. They seemed always just about to break and roll over the little boat in a turmoil of foam. There was a preparatory and long growl in the speech of them. No mind unused to the sea would have concluded that the dinghy could ascend these sheer heights in time. The shore was still afar. The oiler was a wily surfman. "Boys," he said swiftly, "she won't live three minutes more, and we're too far out to swim. Shall I take her to sea again, Captain?"

10 "Yes; go ahead!" said the captain.

This oiler, by a series of quick miracles and fast and steady oarsmanship, turned the boat in the middle of the surf and took her safely to sea again.

There was a considerable silence as the boat bumped over the furrowed sea to deeper water. Then somebody in gloom spoke: "Well, anyhow, they must have seen us from the shore by now."

The gulls went in slanting flight up the wind toward the grey, desolate cast. A squall, marked by 20 dingy clouds and clouds brick-red like smoke from a burning building, appeared from the south-east.

"What do you think of those life-saving people? Ain't they peaches?"

"Funny they haven't seen us."

"Maybe they think we're out here for sport! Maybe they think we're fishin'. Maybe they think we're damned fools."

It was a long afternoon. A changed tide tried to force them southward, but wind and wave said northward. Far ahead, where coast-line, sea, and sky formed their mighty angle, there were little dots which seemed to indicate a city on the shore.

"St. Augustine?"

The captain shook his head. "Too near Mosquito Inlet."

And the oiler rowed, and then the correspondent rowed; then the oiler rowed. It was a weary business. The human back can become the seat of more aches and pains than are registered in books for the composite anatomy of a regiment. It is a limited area, but it can become the theatre of innumerable muscular conflicts, tangles, wrenches, knots, and other comforts.

"Did you ever like to row, Billie?" asked the correspondent.

"No," said the oiler; "hang it!"

When one exchanged the rowing-seat for a place in the bottom of the boat, he suffered a bodily depression that caused him to be careless of everything

save an obligation to wiggle one finger. There was cold sea-water swashing to and fro in the boat, and he lay in it. His head, pillowed on a thwart, was within an inch of the swirl of a wave-crest, and sometimes a particularly obstreperous sea came in-board and drenched him once more. But these matters did not annoy him. It is almost certain that if the boat had capsized he would have tumbled comfortably out upon the ocean as if he felt sure that it was a great soft mattress.

"Look! There's a man on the shore!"

"Where?"

"There! See 'im? See 'im?"

"Yes, sure! He's walking along."

"Now he's stopped. Look! He's facing us!"

"He's waving at us!"

"So he is! By thunder!"

"Ah, now we're all right! Now we're all right! There'll be a boat out here for us in half an hour!"

"He's going on. He's running. He's going up to that house there."

The remote beach seemed lower than the sea and it required a searching glance to discern the like black figure. The captain saw a floating stick, and they rowed to it. A bath towel was by some weird chance in the boat, and, tying this on the stick, the captain waved it. The oarsman did not dare turn his head, so he was obliged to ask questions.

"What's he doing now?"

"He's standing still again. He's looking, I think—There he goes again—toward the house.—Now he's stopped again."

"Is he waving at us?"

"No, not now, he was, though."

"Look! There comes another man!"

"He's running."

"Look at him go, would you!"

"Why, he's on a bicycle. Now he's met the other man. They're both waving at us. Look!"

"There comes something up the beach."

"What the devil is that thing?"

"Why, it looks like a boat."

"Why, certainly, it's a boat."

"No, it's on wheels."

"Yes, so it is. Well, that must be the life-boat. They drag them along shore on a wagon."

"That's the life-boat, sure."

"No, by God, it's—it's an omnibus."

"I tell you it's a life-boat."

"It is not! It's an omnibus. I can see it plain. See? One of these big hotel omnibuses."

"By thunder, you're right. It's an omnibus, sure as fate. What do you suppose they are doing with an omnibus? Maybe they are going around collecting the life-crew, hey?"

"That's it, likely. Look! There's a fellow waving a little black flag. He's standing on the steps of the omnibus. There come those other two fellows. Now they're all talking together. Look at the fellow with the flag. Maybe he ain't waving it!"

"That ain't a flag, is it? That's his coat. Why, certainly, that's his coat."

"So it is, it's his coat. He's taken it off and is waving it around his head. But would you look at him swing it!"

"Oh, say, there isn't any life-saving station there. That's just a winter-resort hotel omnibus that has brought over some of the boarders to see us drown."

"What's that idiot with the coat mean? What's he signalling, anyhow?"

"It looks as if he were trying to tell us to go north. There must be a life-saving station up there."

"No, he thinks we're fishing. Just giving us a merry hand. See? Ah, there, Willie!"

"Well, I wish I could make something out of those signals. What do you suppose he means?"

"He don't mean anything, he's just playing."

"Well, if he'd just signal us to try the surf again, or to go to sea and wait, or go north, or go south, or go to hell, there would be some reason in it. But look at him! He just stands there and keeps his coat revolving like a wheel. The ass!"

"There come more people."

"Now there's quite a mob. Look! Isn't that a boat?"

"Where? Oh, I see where you mean. No, that's no boat."

"That fellow is still waving his coat."

"He must think we like to see him do that. Why don't he quit it? It don't mean anything."

"I don't know. I think he is trying to make us go north. It must be that there's a life-saving station there somewhere."

"Say, he ain't tired yet. Look at 'im wave!"

"Wonder how long he can keep that up. He's been revolving his coat ever since he caught sight of us. He's an idiot. Why ain't they getting men to bring

a boat out? A fishing-boat—one of those big yawls—could come out here all right. Why don't he do something?"

"Oh, it's all right now."

"They'll have a boat out here for us in less than no time, now that they've seen us."

A faint yellow tone came into the sky over the low land. The shadows on the sea slowly deepened. The wind bore coldness with it, and the men began to shiver.

"Holy smoke!" said one, allowing his voice to express his impious mood, "if we keep on monkeying out here! If we've got to flounder out here all night!"

"Oh, we'll never have to stay here all night! Don't you worry. They've seen us now, and it won't be long before they'll come chasing out after us."

The shore grew dusky. The man waving a coat blended gradually into this gloom, and it swallowed in the same manner the omnibus and the group of people. The spray, when it dashed uproariously over the side, made the voyagers shrink and swear like men who were being branded.

"I'd like to catch the chump who waved the coat. I feel like socking him one, just for luck."

"Why? What did he do?"

"Oh, nothing, but then he seemed so damned cheerful."

In the meantime the oiler rowed, and then the correspondent rowed, and then the oiler rowed. Grey-faced and bowed forward, they mechanically, turn by turn, plied the leaden oars. The form of the light-house had vanished from the southern horizon, but finally a pale star appeared, just lifting from the sea. The streaked saffron in the west passed before the all-merging darkness, and the sea to the east was black. The land had vanished, and was expressed only by the low and drear thunder of the surf.

"If I am going to be drowned—if I am going to be drowned—if I am going to be drowned. why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, 40 was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees? Was I brought here merely to have my nose dragged away as I was about to nibble the sacred cheese of life?"

The patient captain, drooped over the water-jar, was sometimes obliged to speak to the oarsman.

"Keep her head up! Keep her head up!"

"Keep her head up, sir." The voices were weary and low.

This was surely a quiet evening. All save the oarsman lay heavily and listlessly in the boat's bottom. As for him, his eyes were just capable of noting the tall black waves that swept forward in a most sinister silence, save for an occasional subdued growl of a crest.

The cook's head was on a thwart, and he looked without interest at the water under his nose. He was deep in other scenes. Finally he spoke. "Billie," he 10 murmured, dreamily, "what kind of pie do you like best?"

V

"Pie!" said the oiler and the correspondent, agitatedly. "Don't talk about those things, blast you!"

"Well," said the cook, "I was just thinking about ham sandwiches, and—"

A night on the sea in an open boat is a long night. As darkness settled finally, the shine of the light, lifting from the sea in the south, changed to full gold. On the northern horizon a new light appeared, a small bluish gleam on the edge of the waters. These two lights were the furniture of the world. Otherwise there was nothing but waves.

Two men huddled in the stern, and distances were so magnificent in the dinghy that the rower was enabled to keep his feet partly warm by thrusting them under his companions. Their legs indeed extended far under the rowing-seat until they touched the feet of the captain forward. Sometimes, despite the efforts of the tired oarsman, a wave came piling into the boat, an icy wave of the night, and the chilling water soaked them anew. They would twist their bodies for a moment and groan, and sleep the dead sleep once more, while the water in the boat gurgled about them as the craft rocked.

The plan of the oiler and the correspondent was for one to row until he lost the ability, and then arouse the other from his sea-water couch in the bottom of the boat.

The oiler plied the oars until his head drooped forward and the overpowering sleep blinded him; and he rowed yet afterward. Then he touched a man in the bottom of the boat, and called his name. "Will you spell me for a little while?" he said meekly.

"Sure, Billie," said the correspondent, awaking and dragging himself to a sitting position. They exchanged places carefully, and the oiler, cuddling

down in the sea-water at the cook's side, seemed to go to sleep instantly

The particular violence of the sea had ceased. The waves came without snarling. The obligation of the man at the oars was to keep the boat headed so that the tilt of the rollers would not capsize her, and to preserve her from filling when the crests rushed past. The black waves were silent and hard to be seen in the darkness. Often one was almost upon the boat before the oarsman was aware.

In a low voice the correspondent addressed the captain. He was not sure that the captain was awake, although this iron man seemed to be always awake. "Captain, shall I keep her making for that light north, sir?"

The same steady voice answered him. "Yes. Keep it about two points off the port bow."

The cook had tied a life-belt around himself in order to get even the warmth which this clumsy cork contrivance could donate, and he seemed almost as stove-like when a rower, whose teeth invariably chattered wildly as soon as he ceased his labour, dropped down to sleep.

The correspondent, as he rowed, looked down at the two men sleeping underfoot. The cook's arm was around the oiler's shoulders, and, with their fragmentary clothing and haggard faces, they were the babes of the sea—a grotesque rendering of the old babes in the wood.

Later he must have grown stupid at his work, for suddenly there was a growling of water, and a crest came with a roar and a swash into the boat, and it was a wonder that it did not set the cook afloat in his life-belt. The cook continued to sleep, but the oiler sat up, blinking his eyes and shaking with the new cold.

"Oh, I'm awful sorry, Billic," said the correspondent, contritely.

"That's all right, old boy," said the oiler, and lay down again and was asleep.

Presently it seemed that even the captain dozed, and the correspondent thought that he was the one man afloat on all the ocean. The wind had a voice as it came over the waves, and it was sadder than the end.

There was a long, loud swishing astern of the boat, and a gleaming trail of phosphorescence, like blue flame, was furrowed on the black waters. It might have been made by a monstrous knife.

Then there came a stillness, while the correspondent breathed with open mouth and looked at the sea.

Suddenly there was another swish and another long flash of bluish light, and this time it was alongside the boat, and might almost have been reached with an oar. The correspondent saw an enormous fin speed like a shadow through the water, hurling the crystalline spray and leaving the long glowing trail.

The correspondent looked over his shoulder at the captain. His face was hidden, and he seemed to be asleep. He looked at the babes of the sea. They certainly were asleep. So, being bereft of sympathy, he leaned a little way to one side and swore softly into the sea.

But the thing did not then leave the vicinity of the boat. Ahead or astern, on one side or the other, at intervals long or short, fled the long sparkling streak, and there was to be heard the *whmoo* of the dark fin. The speed and power of the thing was greatly to be admired. It cut the water like a gigantic and keen projectile.

The presence of this bidding thing did not affect the man with the same horror that it would if he had been a picnicker. He simply looked at the sea dully and swore in an undertone.

Nevertheless, it is true that he did not wish to be alone with the thing. He wished one of his companions to awake by chance and keep him company with it. But the captain hung motionless over the water-jar, and the oiler and the cook in the bottom of the boat were plunged in slumber.

VI

"If I am going to be drowned—if I am going to be drowned—if I am going to be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees?"

During this dismal night, it may be remarked that a man would conclude that it was really the intention of the seven mad gods to drown him, despite the abominable injustice of it. For it was certainly an abominable injustice to drown a man who had worked so hard, so hard. The man felt it would be a crime most unnatural. Other people had drowned at sea since galleys swarmed with painted sails, but still—

When it occurs to a man that nature does not regard him as important, and that she feels she would not maim the universe by disposing of him, he at

first wishes to throw bricks at the temple, and he hates deeply the fact that there are no bricks and no temples. Any visible expression of nature would surely be pelleted with his jeers.

Then, if there be no tangible thing to hoot, he feels, perhaps, the desire to confront a personification and indulge in pleas, bowed to one knee, and with hands supplicant, saying, "Yes, but I love myself."

A high cold star on a winter's night is the word he feels that she says to him. Thereafter he knows the pathos of his situation.

The men in the dinghy had not discussed these matters, but each had, no doubt, reflected upon them in silence and according to his mind. There was seldom any expression upon their faces save the general one of complete weariness. Speech was devoted to the business of the boat.

To chime the notes of his emotion, a verse mysteriously entered the correspondent's head. He had even forgotten that he had forgotten this verse, but it suddenly was in his mind.

A soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers;
There was lack of woman's nursing, there was dearth of
woman's tears;
But a comrade stood beside him, and he took that com-
rade's hand,
And he said, "I never more shall see my own, my native
land."⁵

In his childhood the correspondent had been made acquainted with the fact that a soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers, but he had never regarded the fact as important. Myriads of his school-fellows had informed him of the soldier's plight, but the dinning had naturally ended by making him perfectly indifferent. He had never considered it his affair that a soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers, nor had it appeared to him as a matter for sorrow. It was less to him than the breaking of a pencil's point.

Now, however, it quaintly came to him as a human, living thing. It was no longer merely a picture of a few throes in the breast of a poet, meanwhile drinking tea and warming his feet at the grate; it was an actuality—stern, mournful, and fine.

The correspondent plainly saw the soldier. He lay on the sand with his feet out straight and still. While his pale left hand was upon his chest in an attempt to thwart the going of his life, the blood

came between his fingers. In the far Algerian distance, a city of low square forms was set against a sky that was faint with the last sunset hues. The correspondent, plying the oars and dreaming of the slow and slower movements of the lips of the soldier, was moved by a profound and perfectly impersonal comprehension. He was sorry for the soldier of the Legion who lay dying in Algiers.

The thing which had followed the boat and waited had evidently grown bored at the delay. There was no longer to be heard the slash of the cutwater, and there was no longer the flame of the long trail. The light in the north still glimmered, but it was apparently no nearer to the boat. Sometimes the boom of the surf rang in the correspondent's ears, and he turned the craft seaward then and rowed harder. Southward, some one had evidently built a watch-fire on the beach. It was too low and too far to be seen, but it made a shimmering, roseate reflection upon the bluff in back of it, and this could be discerned from the boat. The wind came stronger, and sometimes a wave suddenly raged out like a mountain cat, and there was to be seen the sheen and sparkle of a broken crest.

The captain, in the bow, moved on his water-jar and sat erect. "Pretty long night," he observed to the correspondent. He looked at the shore. "Those life-saving people take their time."

"Did you see that shark playing around?"

"Yes, I saw him. He was a big fellow, all right."

"Wish I had known you were awake."

Later the correspondent spoke into the bottom of the boat. "Billie!" There was a slow and gradual disentanglement. "Billie, will you spell me?"

"Sure," said the oiler.

As soon as the correspondent touched the cold, comfortable sea-water in the bottom of the boat and had huddled close to the cook's life-belt he was deep in sleep, despite the fact that his teeth played all the popular airs. This sleep was so good to him that it was but a moment before he heard a voice call his name in a tone that demonstrated the last stages of exhaustion. "Will you spell me?"

"Sure, Billie."

The light in the north had mysteriously vanished, but the correspondent took his course from the wide-awake captain.

Later in the night they took the boat farther out to sea, and the captain directed the cook to take one

⁵ Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton, "Bingen on the Rhine."

oar at the stern and keep the boat facing the seas. He was to call out if he should hear the thunder of the surf. This plan enabled the oiler and the correspondent to get respite together. "We'll give those boys a chance to get into shape again," said the captain. They curled down and, after a few preliminary chattering and trembles, slept once more the dead sleep. Neither knew they had bequeathed to the cook the company of another shark, or perhaps the same shark.

As the boat caroused on the waves, spray occasionally bumped over the side and gave them a fresh soaking, but this had no power to break their repose. The ominous slash of the wind and the water affected them as it would have affected mummies.

"Boys," said the cook, with the notes of every reluctance in his voice, "she's drifted in pretty close. I guess one of you had better take her to sea again." The correspondent, aroused, heard the crash of the toppled crests.

As he was rowing, the captain gave him some whisky-and-water, and this steadied the chills out of him. "If I ever get ashore and anybody shows me even a photograph of an oar—"

At last there was a short conversation.

"Billie!—Billie, will you spell me?"

"Sure," said the oiler.

VII

When the correspondent again opened his eyes, the sea and the sky were each of the grey hue of the dawning. Later, carmine and gold was painted upon the waters. The morning appeared finally, in its splendour, with a sky of pure blue, and the sunlight flamed on the tips of the waves.

On the distant dunes were set many little black cottages, and a tall white windmill reared above them. No man, nor dog, nor bicycle appeared on the beach. The cottages might have formed a deserted village.

The voyagers scanned the shore. A conference was held in the boat. "Well," said the captain, "if no help is coming, we might better try a run through the surf right away. If we stay out here much longer we will be too weak to do anything for ourselves at all." The others silently acquiesced in this reasoning. The boat was headed for the beach. The correspondent wondered if none ever ascended the tall wind-tower, and if then they never looked seaward.

This tower was a giant, standing with its back to the plight of the ants. It represented in a degree, to the correspondent, the serenity of nature amid the struggles of the individual—nature in the wind, and nature in the vision of men. She did not seem cruel to him then, nor beneficent, nor treacherous, nor wise. But she was indifferent, flatly indifferent. It is, perhaps, plausible that a man in this situation, impressed with the unconcern of the universe, should see the innumerable flaws of his life, and have them taste wickedly in his mind, and wish for another chance. A distinction between right and wrong seems absurdly clear to him, then, in this new ignorance of the grave-edge, and he understands that if he were given another opportunity he would mend his conduct and his words, and be better and brighter during an introduction or at a tea.

"Now, boys," said the captain, "she is going to swamp sure. All we can do is to work her in as far as possible, and then when she swamps, pile out and scramble for the beach. Keep cool now, and don't jump until she swamps sure."

The oiler took the oars. Over his shoulders he scanned the surf. "Captain," he said, "I think I'd better bring her about and keep her head-on to the seas and back her in."

"All right, Billie," said the captain. "Back her in." The oiler swung the boat then, and, seated in the stern, the cook and the correspondent were obliged to look over their shoulders to contemplate the lonely and indifferent shore.

The monstrous inshore rollers heaved the boat high until the men were again enabled to see the white sheets of water scudding up the slanted beach. "We won't get in very close," said the captain. Each time a man could wiest his attention from the rollers, he turned his glance toward the shore, and in the expression of the eyes during this contemplation there was a singular quality. The correspondent, observing the others, knew that they were not afraid, but the full meaning of their glances was shrouded.

As for himself, he was too tired to grapple fundamentally with the fact. He tried to coerce his mind into thinking of it, but the mind was dominated at this time by the muscles, and the muscles said they did not care. It merely occurred to him that if he should drown it would be a shame.

There were no hurried words, no pallor, no plain agitation. The men simply looked at the shore.

"Now, remember to get well clear of the boat when you jump," said the captain.

Seaward the crest of a roller suddenly fell with a thunderous crash, and the long white comber came roaring down upon the boat.

"Steady now," said the captain. The men were silent. They turned their eyes from the shore to the comber and waited. The boat slid up the incline, leaped at the furious top, bounced over it, and swung down the long back of the wave. Some water had been shipped, and the cook bailed it out.

But the next crest crashed also. The tumbling, boiling flood of white water caught the boat and whirled it almost perpendicular. Water swarmed in from all sides. The correspondent had his hands on the gunwale at this time, and when the water entered at that place he swiftly withdrew his fingers, as if he objected to wetting them.

The little boat, drunken with this weight of water, reeled and snuggled deeper into the sea.

"Bail her out, cook! Bail her out!" said the captain.

"All right, Captain," said the cook.

"Now, boys, the next one will do for us sure," said the oiler. "Mind to jump clear of the boat."

The third wave moved forward, huge, furious, implacable. It fairly swallowed the dinghy, and almost simultaneously the men tumbled into the sea. A piece of life-belt had lain in the bottom of the boat, and as the correspondent went overboard he held this to his chest with his left hand.

The January water was icy, and he reflected immediately that it was colder than he had expected to find it off the coast of Florida. This appeared to his dazed mind as a fact important enough to be noted at the time. The coldness of the water was sad; it was tragic. This fact was somehow mixed and confused with his opinion of his own situation, so that it seemed almost a proper reason for tears. The water was cold.

When he came to the surface he was conscious of little but the noisy water. Afterward he saw his companions in the sea. The oiler was ahead in the race. He was swimming strongly and rapidly. Off to the correspondent's left, the cook's great white and corked back bulged out of the water; and in the rear the captain was hanging with his one good hand to the keel of the overturned dinghy.

There is a certain immovable quality to a shore,

and the correspondent wondered at it amid the confusion of the sea.

It seemed also very attractive; but the correspondent knew that it was a long journey, and he paddled leisurely. The piece of life-preserver lay under him, and sometimes he whirled down the incline of a wave as if he were on a hand-sled.

But finally he arrived at a place in the sea where travel was beset with difficulty. He did not pause swimming to inquire what manner of current had caught him, but there his progress ceased. The shore was set before him like a bit of scenery on a stage, and he looked at it and understood with his eyes each detail of it.

As the cook passed, much farther to the left, the captain was calling to him, "Turn over on your back, cook! Turn over on your back and use the oar."

"All right, sir." The cook turned on his back, and, paddling with an oar, went ahead as if he were a canoe.

Presently the boat also passed to the left of the correspondent, with the captain clinging with one hand to the keel. He would have appeared like a man raising himself to look over a board fence if it were not for the extraordinary gymnastics of the boat. The correspondent marvelled that the captain could still hold to it.

They passed on nearer to shore—the oiler, the cook, the captain—and following them went the water-jar, bouncing gaily over the seas.

The correspondent remained in the grip of this strange new enemy—a current. The shore, with its white slope of sand and its green bluff topped with little silent cottages, was spread like a picture before him. It was very near to him then, but he was impressed as one who, in a gallery, looks at a scene from Brittany or Algiers.

He thought: "I'm going to drown? Can it be possible? Can it be possible? Can it be possible?" Perhaps an individual must consider his own death to be the final phenomenon of nature.

But later a wave perhaps whirled him out of this small deadly current, for he found suddenly that he could again make progress toward the shore. Later still he was aware that the captain, clinging with one hand to the keel of the dinghy, had his face turned away from the shore and toward him, and was calling his name. "Come to the boat! Come to the boat!"

In his struggle to reach the captain and the boat, he reflected that when one gets properly wearied drowning must really be a comfortable arrangement—a cessation of hostilities accompanied by a large degree of relief, and he was glad of it, for the main thing in his mind for some moments had been honor of the temporary agony. He did not wish to be hurt.

Presently he saw a man running along the shore. He was undressing with most remarkable speed. Coat, trousers, shirt, everything flew magically off ¹⁰ him.

"Come to the boat!" called the captain.

"All right, Captain." As the correspondent paddled, he saw the captain let himself down to bottom and leave the boat. Then the correspondent performed his one little marvel of the voyage. A large wave caught him and flung him with ease and supreme speed completely over the boat and far beyond it. It struck him even then as an event in gymnastics and a true miracle of the sea. An over-²⁰turned boat in the surf is not a plaything to a swimming man.

The correspondent arrived in water that reached only to his waist, but his condition did not enable him to stand for more than a moment. Each wave knocked him into a heap, and the undertow pulled at him.

Then he saw the man who had been running and undressing, and undressing and running, come bounding into the water. He dragged ashore the ³⁰ cook, and then waded toward the captain, but the

captain waved him away and sent him to the correspondent. He was naked—naked as a tree in winter, but a halo was about his head, and he shone like a saint. He gave a strong pull, and a long drag, and a bully heave at the correspondent's hand. The correspondent, schooled in the minor formulæ, said, "Thanks, old man." But suddenly the man cried, "What's that?" He pointed a swift finger. The correspondent said, "Go."

In the shallows, face downward, lay the oiler. His forehead touched sand that was periodically, between each wave, clear of the sea.

The correspondent did not know all that transpired afterward. When he achieved safe ground he fell, striking the sand with each particular part of his body. It was as if he had dropped from a roof, but the thud was grateful to him.

It seems that instantly the beach was populated with men with blankets, clothes, and flasks, and women with coffee-pots and all the remedies sacred to their minds. The welcome of the land to the men from the sea was warm and generous, but a still and dipping shape was carried slowly up the beach, and the land's welcome for it could only be the different and sinister hospitality of the grave.

When it came night, the white waves paced to and fro in the moonlight, and the wind brought the sound of the great sea's voice to the men on the shore, and they felt that they could then be inter-
peters

1897

1898

The Blue Hotel ⁶

I

The Palace Hotel at Fort Romper was painted a light blue, a shade that is on the legs of a kind of heron, causing the bird to declare its position against

⁶ Reprinted from *Twenty Stories* by Stephen Crane, by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright 1926 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

"The Blue Hotel" was published in 1899 in a volume of stories in which "The Monster" was the title story. Crane passed through Nebraska in February, 1895, but whether or not he saw a "blue hotel," or characters such as those in the story, is not known. "The Blue Hotel" is, like the best of Crane's work, a study in fear. It anticipated the war stories of Hemingway and other "realists" of the twentieth century. H. L. Mencken regards it as one of the great stories in American literature—see his Introduction to *Major Conflicts* (vol. X of *The Work of Stephen Crane*), which contains this story.

any background. The Palace Hotel, then, was always screaming and howling in a way that made the dazzling winter landscape of Nebraska seem only a grey swampish hush. It stood alone on the prairie, and when the snow was falling the town two hundred yards away was not visible. But when the traveller alighted at the railway station he was obliged to pass the Palace Hotel before he could come upon the company of low clapboard houses which composed ⁴⁰ Fort Romper, and it was not to be thought that any traveller could pass the Palace Hotel without looking at it. Pat Scully, the proprietor, had proved himself a master of strategy when he chose his paints. It is true that on clear days, when the great transcon-

tinental expresses, long lines of swaying Pullmans, swept through Fort Romper, passengers were overcome at the sight, and the cult that knows the browns and the subdivisions of the dark greens of the East expressed shame, pity, horror, in a laugh. But to the citizens of this prairie town and to the people who would naturally stop there, Pat Scully had performed a feat. With this opulence and splendour, these creeds, classes, egotisms, that streamed through Romper on the rails day after day, they had no colour in common.

As if the displayed delights of such a blue hotel were not sufficiently enticing, it was Scully's habit to go every morning and evening to meet the leisurely trains that stopped at Romper and work his seductions upon any man that he might see wavering, grip-sack in hand.

One morning, when a snow-crust engine dragged its long string of freight cars and its one passenger coach to the station, Scully performed the marvel of catching three men. One was a shaky and quick-eyed Swede, with a great shining cheap valise; one was a tall bronzed cowboy, who was on his way to a ranch near the Dakota line; one was a little silent man from the East, who didn't look it, and didn't announce it. Scully practically made them prisoners. He was so nimble and merry and kindly that each probably felt it would be the height of brutality to try to escape. They trudged off over the creaking board sidewalks in the wake of the eager little Irishman. He wore a heavy fur cap squeezed tightly down on his head. It caused his two red ears to stick out stiffly, as if they were made of tin.

At last, Scully, elaborately, with boisterous hospitality, conducted them through the portals of the blue hotel. The room which they entered was small. It seemed to be merely a proper temple for an enormous stove, which, in the centre, was humming with godlike violence. At various points on its surface the iron had become luminous and glowed yellow from the heat. Beside the stove Scully's son Johnnie was playing High-Five with an old farmer who had whiskers both grey and sandy. They were quarrelling. Frequently the old farmer turned his face toward a box of sawdust—coloured brown from tobacco juice—that was behind the stove, and spat with an air of great impatience and irritation. With a loud flourish of words Scully destroyed the game of cards, and hustled his son upstairs with part of the baggage of

the new guests. He himself conducted them to three basins of the coldest water in the world. The cowboy and the Easterner burnished themselves fiery red with this water, until it seemed to be some kind of metal-polish. The Swede, however, merely dipped his fingers gingerly and with trepidation. It was notable that throughout this series of small ceremonies the three travellers were made to feel that Scully was very benevolent. He was conferring great favours upon them. He handed the towel from one to another with an air of philanthropic impulse.

Afterward they went to the first room, and, sitting about the stove, listened to Scully's officious clamour at his daughters, who were preparing the midday meal. They reflected in the silence of experienced men who tread carefully amid new people. Nevertheless, the old farmer, stationary, invincible in his chair near the warmest part of the stove, turned his face from the sawdust-box frequently and addressed a glowing commonplace to the strangers. Usually he was answered in short but adequate sentences by either the cowboy or the Easterner. The Swede said nothing. He seemed to be occupied in making furtive estimates of each man in the room. One might have thought that he had the sense of silly suspicion which comes to guilt. He resembled a badly frightened man.

Later, at dinner, he spoke a little, addressing his conversation entirely to Scully. He volunteered that he had come from New York, where for ten years he had worked as a tailor. These facts seemed to strike Scully as fascinating, and afterward he volunteered that he had lived at Romper for fourteen years. The Swede asked about the crops and the price of labour. He seemed barely to listen to Scully's extended replies. His eyes continued to rove from man to man.

Finally, with a laugh and a wink, he said that some of these Western communities were very dangerous; and after his statement he straightened his legs under the table, tilted his head, and laughed again, loudly. It was plain that the demonstration had no meaning to the others. They looked at him wondering and in silence.

II

As the men trooped heavily back into the front room, the two little windows presented views of a tummoiling sea of snow. The huge arms of the wind

were making attempts—mighty, circular, futile—to embrace the flakes as they sped. A gate-post like a still man with a blanched face stood aghast amid this profligate fury. In a hearty voice Scully announced the presence of a blizzard. The guests of the blue hotel, lighting their pipes, assented with grunts of lazy masculine contentment. No island of the sea could be exempt in the degree of this little room with its humming stove. Johnnie, son of Scully, in a tone which defined his opinion of his ability as a 10 card-player, challenged the old farmer of both grey and sandy whiskers to a game of High-Five. The farmer agreed with a contemptuous and bitter scoff. They sat close to the stove, and squared their knees under a wide board. The cowboy and the Easterner watched the game with interest. The Swede remained near the window, aloof, but with a countenance that showed signs of an inexplicable excitement.

The play of Johnnie and the grey-beard was suddenly ended by another quarrel. The old man arose while casting a look of heated scorn at his adversary. He slowly buttoned his coat, and then stalked with fabulous dignity from the room. In the discreet silence of all the other men the Swede laughed. His laughter rang somehow childish. Men by this time had begun to look at him askance, as if they wished to inquire what ailed him.

A new game was formed jocosely. The cowboy volunteered to become the partner of Johnnie, and they all then turned to ask the Swede to throw in his lot with the little Easterner. He asked some questions about the game, and, learning that it wore many names, and that he had played it when it was under an alias, he accepted the invitation. He strode toward the men nervously, as if he expected to be assaulted. Finally, seated, he gazed from face to face and laughed shrilly. This laugh was so strange that the Easterner looked up quickly, the cowboy sat intent and with his mouth open, and Johnnie paused, hold- 40 ing the cards with still fingers.

Afterward there was a short silence. Then Johnnie said, "Well, let's get at it. Come on now!" They pulled their chairs forward until their knees were bunched under the board. They began to play, and their interest in the game caused the others to forget the manner of the Swede.

The cowboy was a board-whacker. Each time that he held superior cards he whanged them, one by one,

with exceeding force, down upon the improvised table, and took the tricks with a glowing air of prowess and pride that sent thrills of indignation into the hearts of his opponents. A game with a board-whacker in it is sure to become intense. The countenances of the Easterner and the Swede were miserable whenever the cowboy thundered down his aces and kings, while Johnnie, his eyes gleaming with joy, chuckled and chuckled.

Because of the absorbing play none considered the strange ways of the Swede. They paid strict heed to the game. Finally, during a lull caused by a new deal, the Swede suddenly addressed Johnnie. "I suppose there have been a good many men killed in this room." The jaws of the others dropped and they looked at him.

"What in hell are you talking about?" said Johnnie.

The Swede laughed again his blatant laugh, full of a kind of false courage and defiance. "Oh, you know what I mean all right," he answered.

"I'm a liar if I do!" Johnnie protested. The card was halted, and the men stared at the Swede. Johnnie evidently felt that as the son of the proprietor he should make a direct inquiry. "Now, what might you be drivin' at, mister?" he asked. The Swede winked at him. It was a wink full of cunning. His fingers shook on the edge of the board. "Oh, maybe you think I have been to nowheres. Maybe you think I'm a tenderfoot?"

"I don't know nothin' about you," answered Johnnie, "and I don't give a damn where you've been. All I got to say is that I don't know what you're drivin' at. There hasn't never been nobody killed in this room."

The cowboy, who had been steadily gazing at the Swede, then spoke. "What's wrong with you, mister?"

Apparently it seemed to the Swede that he was formidably menaced. He shivered and turned white near the corners of his mouth. He sent an appealing glance in the direction of the little Easterner. During these moments he did not forget to wear his air of advanced pot-valour. "They say they don't know what I mean," he remarked mockingly to the Easterner.

The latter answered after prolonged and cautious reflection. "I don't understand you," he said, impassively.

The Swede made a movement then which announced that he thought he had encountered treachery from the only quarter where he had expected sympathy, if not help. "Oh, I see you are all against me. I sec—"

The cowboy was in a state of deep stupefaction. "Say," he cried, as he tumbled the deck violently down upon the board, "say, what are you gittin' at, hey?"

The Swede sprang up with the celerity of a man 10 escaping from a snake on the floor. "I don't want to fight!" he shouted. "I don't want to fight!"

The cowboy stretched his long legs indolently and deliberately. His hands were in his pockets. He spat into the sawdust-box. "Well, who the hell thought you did?" he inquired.

The Swede backed rapidly toward a corner of the room. His hands were out protectingly in front of his chest, but he was making an obvious struggle to control his fright. "Gentlemen," he quavered. "I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house! I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house!" In his eyes was the dying-swan look. Through the windows could be seen the snow turning blue in the shadow of dusk. The wind tore at the house, and some loose thing beat regularly against the clapboards like a spirit tapping.

A door opened, and Scully himself entered. He paused in surprise as he noted the tragic attitude of the Swede. Then he said, "What's the matter here?" 20

The Swede answered him swiftly and eagerly: "These men are going to kill me."

"Kill you!" ejaculated Scully. "Kill you! What are you talkin'?"

The Swede made the gesture of a martyr.

Scully wheeled sternly upon his son. "What is this, Johnnie?"

The lad had grown sullen. "Damned if I know," he answered. "I can't make no sense to it." He began to shuffle the cards, fluttering them together with an angry snap. "He says a good many men have been killed in this room, or something like that. And he says he's goin' to be killed here too. I don't know what ails him. He's crazy, I shouldn't wonder."

Scully then looked for explanation to the cowboy, but the cowboy simply shrugged his shoulders.

"Kill you?" said Scully again to the Swede. "Kill you? Man, you're off your nut."

"Oh, I know," burst out the Swede. "I know what

will happen. Yes, I'm crazy—yes. Yes, of course, I'm crazy—yes. But I know one thing—" There was a sort of sweat of misery and terror upon his face. "I know I won't get out of here alive."

The cowboy drew a deep breath, as if his mind was passing into the last stages of dissolution. "Well, I'm doggoned," he whispered to himself.

Scully wheeled suddenly and faced his son. "You've been troublin' this man!"

Johnnie's voice was loud with its burden of grievance. "Why, good Gawd, I ain't done nothin' to 'im."

The Swede broke in. "Gentlemen, do not disturb yourselves. I will leave this house. I will go away, because"—he accused them dramatically with his glance—"because I do not want to be killed."

Scully was furious with his son. "Will you tell me what is the matter, you young divil? What's the matter, anyhow? Speak out!"

"Blame it!" cried Johnnie in despair, "don't I tell you I don't know? He—he says we want to kill him, and that's all I know. I can't tell what ails him."

The Swede continued to repeat: "Never mind, Mr. Scully; never mind. I will leave this house. I will go away, because I do not wish to be killed. Yes, of course, I am crazy—yes. But I know one thing! I will go away. I will leave this house. Never mind, Mr. Scully; never mind. I will go away."

"You will not go 'way," said Scully. "You will not go 'way until I hear the reason of this business. If anybody has troubled you I will take care of him. This is my house. You are under my roof, and I will not allow any peaceable man to be troubled here." He cast a terrible eye upon Johnnie, the cowboy, and the Easterner.

"Never mind, Mr. Scully; never mind. I will go away. I do not wish to be killed." The Swede moved toward the door which opened upon the stairs. It was evidently his intention to go at once for his baggage.

"No, no," shouted Scully peremptorily; but the white-faced man slid by him and disappeared. "Now," said Scully severely, "what does this mane?"

Johnnie and the cowboy cried together: "Why, we didn't do nothin' to 'im!"

Scully's eyes were cold. "No," he said, "you didn't?"

Johnnie swore a deep oath. "Why, this is the wildest loon I ever see. We didn't do nothin' at all. We were jest sittin' here playin' cards, and he—"

The father suddenly spoke to the Easterner "Mr Blanc," he asked, "what has these boys been doin'?"

The Easterner reflected again "I didn't see anything wrong at all," he said at last, slowly

Scully began to howl. "But what does it mane?" He stared ferociously at his son "I have a mind to lather you for this, me boy"

Johnnie was frantic "Well, what have I done?" he bawled at his father

III

"I think you are tongue-tied," said Scully finally to his son, the cowboy, and the Easterner, and at the end of this scornful sentence he left the room

Upstairs the Swede was swiftly fastening the straps of his great valise Once his back happened to be half turned toward the door, and, hearing a noise there, he wheeled and sprang up, uttering a loud cry Scully's wrinkled visage showed grimly in the light of the small lamp he carried This yellow effulgence, streaming upward, coloured only his prominent features, and left his eyes, for instance, in mysterious shadow. He resembled a murderer.

"Man! man!" he exclaimed, "have you gone daffy?"

"Oh, no! Oh, no!" rejoined the other "There are people in this world who know pretty nearly as much as you do—understand?"

For a moment they stood gazing at each other. Upon the Swede's deathly pale cheeks were two spots, brightly crimson and sharply edged, as if they had been carefully painted Scully placed the light on the table and sat himself on the edge of the bed He spoke ruminatively "By cracky, I never heard of such a thing in my life. It's a complete muddle. I can't, for the soul of me, think how you ever got this idea into your head." Presently he lifted his eyes and asked. "And did you sure think they were going to kill you?"

The Swede scanned the old man as if he wished to see into his mind "I did," he said at last He obviously suspected that this answer might precipitate an outbreak. As he pulled on a strap his whole arm shook, the elbow wavering like a bit of paper.

Scully banged his hand impressively on the foot-board of the bed "Why, man, we're goin' to have a line of electric street-cars in this town next spring"

"A line of electric street-cars," repeated the Swede, stupidly.

"And," said Scully, "there's a new railroad goin' to be built down from Broken Arm to here Not to mention the four churches and the smashin' big brick school-house. Then there's the big factory, too Why, in two years Rompec'll be a met-tro-pol-is"

Having finished the preparation of his baggage the Swede straightened himself "Mr Scully," he said, with sudden hardness, "how much do I owe you?"

"You don't owe me anythin'," said the old man, angrily.

"Yes, I do," retorted the Swede He took seventy-five cents from his pocket and tendered it to Scully, but the latter snapped his fingers in disdainful refusal However, it happened that they both stood gazing in a strange fashion at three silver pieces on the Swede's open palm

"I'll not take your money," said Scully at last "Not after what's been goin' on here" Then a plan seemed to strike him "Here," he cried, picking up his lamp and moving toward the door. "Here! Come with me a minute."

"No," said the Swede, in overwhelming alarm

"Yes," urged the old man "Come on! I want you to come and see a picter—just across the hall—in my room."

The Swede must have concluded that his hour was come His jaw dropped and his teeth showed like a dead man's. He ultimately followed Scully across the corridor, but he had the step of one hung in chains

Scully flashed the light high on the wall of his own chamber There was revealed a ridiculous photograph of a little girl. She was leaning against a balustrade of gorgeous decoration, and the formidable bang to her hair was prominent. The figure was as graceful as an upright sled-stake, and, withal, it was of the hue of lead. "There," said Scully, tenderly, "that's the picter of my little girl that died. Her name was Carrie She had the purtiest hair you ever saw! I was that fond of her, she—"

Turning then, he saw that the Swede was not contemplating the picture at all, but, instead, was keeping keen watch on the gloom in the rear.

"Look, man!" cried Scully, heartily. "That's the picter of my little gal that died Her name was Carrie And then here's the picter of my oldest boy, Michael He's a lawyer in Lincoln, an' doin' well I gave that boy a grand eddication and I'm glad for it now He's a fine boy. Look at 'im now. Ain't he bold as blazes,

him there in Lincoln, an honoured an' respected gentleman! An honoured and respected gentleman," concluded Scully with a flourish. And, so saying, he smote the Swede jovially on the back.

The Swede faintly smiled.

"Now," said the old man, "there's only one more thing." He dropped suddenly to the floor and thrust his head beneath the bed. The Swede could hear his muffled voice. "I'd keep it under me piller if it wasn't for that boy Johnnie. Then there's the old woman— 10 Where is it now? I never put it twice in the same place. Ah, now come out with you!"

Presently he backed clumsily from under the bed, dragging with him an old coat rolled into a bundle. "I've fetched him," he muttered. Kneeling on the floor, he unrolled the coat and extracted from its heart a large yellow-brown whisky-bottle.

His first manoeuvre was to hold the bottle up to the light. Reassured, apparently, that nobody had been tampering with it, he thrust it with a generous 20 movement toward the Swede.

The weak-kneed Swede was about to eagerly clutch this element of strength, but he suddenly jerked his hand away and cast a look of horror upon Scully.

"Drink," said the old man affectionately. He had risen to his feet, and now stood facing the Swede.

There was a silence. Then again Scully said: "Drink!"

The Swede laughed wildly. He grabbed the bottle, put it to his mouth; and as his lips curled absurdly 30 around the opening and his throat worked, he kept his glance, burning with hatred, upon the old man's face.

IV

After the departure of Scully the three men, with the cardboard still upon their knees, preserved for a long time an astounded silence. Then Johnnie said: "That's the doddangedest Swede I ever see."

"He ain't no Swede," said the cowboy, scornfully. 40

"Well, what is he then?" cried Johnnie. "What is he then?"

"It's my opinion," replied the cowboy deliberately, "he's some kind of a Dutchman." It was a venerable custom of the country to entitle as Swedes all light-haired men who spoke with a heavy tongue. In consequence the idea of the cowboy was not without its daring. "Yes, sir," he repeated. "It's my opinion this feller is some kind of a Dutchman."

"Well, he says he's a Swede, anyhow," muttered Johnnie, sulkily. He turned to the Easterner: "What do you think, Mr. Blanc?"

"Oh, I don't know," replied the Easterner.

"Well, what do you think makes him act that way?" asked the cowboy.

"Why, he's frightened." The Easterner knocked his pipe against a rim of the stove. "He's clear frightened out of his boots."

"What at?" cried Johnnie and the cowboy together.

The Easterner reflected over his answer.

"What at?" cried the others again.

"Oh, I don't know, but it seems to me this man has been reading dime novels, and he thinks he's right out in the middle of it—the shootin' and stabbin' and all."

"But," said the cowboy, deeply scandalized, "this ain't Wyoming, ner none of them places. This is 50 Nebrasker."

"Yes," added Johnnie, "an' why don't he wait till he gits out West?"

The travelled Easterner laughed. "It isn't different there even—not in these days. But he thinks he's right in the middle of hell."

Johnnie and the cowboy mused long.

"It's awful funny," remarked Johnnie at last.

"Yes," said the cowboy. "This is a queer game. I hope we don't git snowed in, because then we'd have to stand this here man bein' around with us all the time. That wouldn't be no good."

"I wish pop would throw him out," said Johnnie.

Presently they heard a loud stamping on the stairs, accompanied by ringing jokes in the voice of old Scully, and laughter, evidently from the Swede. The men around the stove stared vacantly at each other. "Gosh!" said the cowboy. The door flew open, and old Scully, flushed and anecdotal, came into the room. He was jabbering at the Swede, who followed him, laughing bravely. It was the entry of two roisterers from a banquet hall.

"Come now," said Scully sharply to the three seated men, "move up and give us a chance at the stove." The cowboy and the Easterner obediently sidled their chairs to make room for the new-comers. Johnnie, however, simply arranged himself in a more indolent attitude, and then remained motionless.

"Come! Git over, there," said Scully.

"Plenty of room on the other side of the stove," said Johnnie

"Do you think we want to sit in the draught?" roared the father

But the Swede here interposed with a grandeur of confidence. "No, no. Let the boy sit where he likes," he cried in a bullying voice to the father

"All right! All right!" said Scully, deferentially. The cowboy and the Easterner exchanged glances of wonder.

The five chairs were formed in a crescent about one side of the stove. The Swede began to talk, he talked arrogantly, profanely, angrily. Johnnie, the cowboy, and the Easterner maintained a morose silence, while old Scully appeared to be receptive and eager, breaking in constantly with sympathetic ejaculations

Finally the Swede announced that he was thirsty. He moved in his chair, and said that he would go for a drink of water

"I'll get it for you," cried Scully at once.

"No," said the Swede, contemptuously. "I'll get it for myself." He arose and stalked with the air of an owner off into the executive parts of the hotel

As soon as the Swede was out of hearing Scully sprang to his feet and whispered intensely to the others. "Upstairs he thought I was tryin' to poison 'im."

"Say," said Johnnie, "this makes me sick. Why don't you throw 'im out in the snow?"

"Why, he's all right now," declared Scully. "It was only that he was from the East, and he thought this was a tough place. That's all. He's all right now."

The cowboy looked with admiration upon the Easterner. "You were straight," he said. "You were on to that there Dutchman."

"Well," said Johnnie to his father, "he may be all right now, but I don't see it. Other time he was scared, but now he's too fresh."

Scully's speech was always a combination of Irish brogue and idiom, Western twang and idiom, and scraps of curiously formal diction taken from the story-books and newspapers. He now hurled a strange mass of language at the head of his son. "What do I keep? What do I keep? What do I keep?" he demanded, in a voice of thunder. He slapped his knee impressively, to indicate that he himself was going to make reply, and that all should heed. "I keep a

hotel," he shouted. "A hotel, do you mind? A guest under my roof has sacred privileges. He is to be intimidated by none. Not one word shall he hear that would prejudice him in favour of goin' away. I'll not have it. There's no place in this here town where they can say they ever took in a guest of mine because he was afraid to stay here." He wheeled suddenly upon the cowboy and the Easterner. "Am I right?"

"Yes, Mr. Scully," said the cowboy, "I think so you're right."

"Yes, Mr. Scully," said the Easterner, "I think so you're right."

v

At six-o'clock supper, the Swede fizzed like a fire-wheel. He sometimes seemed on the point of bursting into riotous song, and in all his madness he was encouraged by old Scully. The Easterner was encased in reserve, the cowboy sat in wide-mouthed amazement, forgetting to eat, while Johnnie wrathfully demolished great plates of food. The daughters of the house, when they were obliged to replenish the biscuits, approached as warily as Indians, and, having succeeded in their purpose, fled with ill-concealed trepidation. The Swede dominated the whole feast, and he gave it the appearance of a cruel bacchanal. He seemed to have grown suddenly taller, he gazed, brutally disdainful, into every face. His voice rang through the room. Once when he jabbed out harpoon-fashion with his fork to pinion a biscuit, the weapon nearly impaled the hand of the Easterner, which had been stretched quietly out for the same biscuit.

After supper, as the men filed toward the other room, the Swede smote Scully ruthlessly on the shoulder. "Well, old boy, that was a good, square meal." Johnnie looked hopefully at his father; he knew that shoulder was tender from an old fall; and, indeed, it appeared for a moment as if Scully was going to flame out over the matter, but in the end he smiled a sickly smile and remained silent. The others understood from his manner that he was admitting his responsibility for the Swede's new view-point.

Johnnie, however, addressed his parent in an aside. "Why don't you license somebody to kick you downstairs?" Scully scowled darkly by way of reply.

When they were gathered about the stove, the Swede insisted on another game of High-Five. Scully gently deprecated the plan at first, but the Swede

turned a wolfish glare upon him. The old man subsided, and the Swede canvassed the others. In his tone there was always a great threat. The cowboy and the Easterner both remarked indifferently that they would play. Scully said that he would presently have to go to meet the 6.58 train, and so the Swede turned menacingly upon Johnnie. For a moment their glances crossed like blades, and then Johnnie smiled and said, "Yes, I'll play."

They formed a square, with the little board on their knees. The Easterner and the Swede were again partners. As the play went on, it was noticeable that the cowboy was not board-whacking as usual. Meanwhile, Scully, near the lamp, had put on his spectacles and, with an appearance curiously like an old priest, was reading a newspaper. In time he went out to meet the 6.58 train, and, despite his precautions, a gust of polar wind whirled into the room as he opened the door. Besides scattering the cards, it chilled the players to the marrow. The Swede cursed frightfully. When Scully returned, his entrance disturbed a cosy and friendly scene. The Swede again cursed. But presently they were once more intent, their heads bent forward and their hands moving swiftly. The Swede had adopted the fashion of board-whacking.

Scully took up his paper and for a long time remained immersed in matters which were extraordinarily remote from him. The lamp burned badly, and once he stopped to adjust the wick. The newspaper, as he turned from page to page, rustled with a slow and comfortable sound. Then suddenly he heard three terrible words: "You are cheatin'!"

Such scenes often prove that there can be little of dramatic import in environment. Any room can present a tragic front; any room can be comic. This little den was now hideous as a torture-chamber. The new faces of the men themselves had changed it upon the instant. The Swede held a huge fist in front of Johnnie's face, while the latter looked steadily over it into the blazing orbs of his accuser. The Easterner had grown pallid; the cowboy's jaw had dropped in that expression of bovine amazement which was one of his important mannerisms. After the three words, the first sound in the room was made by Scully's paper as it floated forgotten to his feet. His spectacles had also fallen from his nose, but by a clutch he had saved them in air. His hand, grasping the spectacles, now remained poised awkwardly

and near his shoulder. He stared at the card-players.

Probably the silence was while a second elapsed. Then, if the floor had been suddenly twitched out from under the men they could not have moved quicker. The five had projected themselves headlong toward a common point. It happened that Johnnie, in rising to hurl himself upon the Swede, had stumbled slightly because of his curiously instinctive care for the cards and the board. The loss of the moment allowed time for the arrival of Scully, and also allowed the cowboy time to give the Swede a great push which sent him staggering back. The men found tongue together, and hoarse shouts of rage, appeal, or fear burst from every throat. The cowboy pushed and jostled feverishly at the Swede, and the Easterner and Scully clung wildly to Johnnie; but through the smoky air, above the swaying bodies of the peace-compellers, the eyes of the two warriors ever sought each other in glances of challenge that were at once hot and steely.

Of course the board had been overturned, and now the whole company of cards was scattered over the floor, where the boots of the men trampled the fat and painted kings and queens as they gazed with their silly eyes at the war that was waging above them.

Scully's voice was dominating the yells. "Stop now! Stop, I say! Stop, now—"

Johnnie, as he struggled to burst through the rank formed by Scully and the Easterner, was crying, "Well, he says I cheated! He says I cheated! I won't allow no man to say I cheated! If he says I cheated, he's a ———!"

The cowboy was telling the Swede, "Quit, now! Quit, d'ye hear—"

The screams of the Swede never ceased: "He did cheat! I saw him! I saw him—"

As for the Easterner, he was importuning in a voice that was not heeded: "Wait a moment, can't you? Oh, wait a moment. What's the good of a fight over a game of cards? Wait a moment—"

In this tumult no complete sentences were clear. "Cheat" — "Quit" — "He says" — these fragments pierced the uproar and rang out sharply. It was remarkable that, whereas Scully undoubtedly made the most noise, he was the least heard of any of the riotous band.

Then suddenly there was a great cessation. It was

as if each man had paused for breath, and although the room was still lighted with the anger of men, it could be seen that there was no danger of immediate conflict, and at once Johnnie, shouldering his way forward, almost succeeded in confronting the Swede. "What did you say I cheated for? What did you say I cheated for? I don't cheat, and I won't let no man say I do!"

The Swede said, "I saw you! I saw you!"

"Well," cried Johnnie, "I'll fight any man what 10 says I cheat!"

"No, you won't," said the cowboy. "Not here."

"Ah, be still, can't you?" said Scully, coming between them.

The quiet was sufficient to allow the Easterner's voice to be heard. He was repeating, "Oh, wait a moment, can't you? What's the good of a fight over a game of cards? Wait a moment!"

Johnnie, his red face appearing above his father's shoulder, hailed the Swede again. "Did you say I 20 cheated?"

The Swede showed his teeth. "Yes."

"Then," said Johnnie, "we must fight."

"Yes, fight," roared the Swede. He was like a demoniac. "Yes, fight! I'll show you what kind of a man I am! I'll show you who you want to fight! Maybe you think I can't fight! Maybe you think I can't! I'll show you, you skin, you card-sharp! Yes, you cheated! You cheated! You cheated!"

"Well, let's go at it, then, mister," said Johnnie, 30 coolly.

The cowboy's brow was beaded with sweat from his efforts in intercepting all sorts of raids. He turned in despair to Scully. "What are you goin' to do now?"

A change had come over the Celtic visage of the old man. He now seemed all eagerness, his eyes glowed.

"We'll let them fight," he answered, stalwartly. "I can't put up with it any longer. I've stood this 40 damned Swede till I'm sick. We'll let them fight."

VI

The men prepared to go out of doors. The Easterner was so nervous that he had great difficulty in getting his arms into the sleeves of his new leather coat. As the cowboy drew his fur cap down over his ears his hands trembled. In fact, Johnnie and old Scully were the only ones who displayed no agita-

tion. These preliminaries were conducted without words.

Scully threw open the door. "Well, come on," he said. Instantly a terrific wind caused the flame of the lamp to struggle at its wick, while a puff of black smoke sprang from the chimney-top. The stove was in mid-current of the blast, and its voice swelled to equal the roar of the storm. Some of the scared and bedabbled cards were caught up from the floor and dashed helplessly against the farther wall. The men lowered their heads and plunged into the tempest as into a sea.

No snow was falling, but great whirls and clouds of flakes, swept up from the ground by the frantic winds, were streaming southward with the speed of bullets. The covered land was blue with the sheen of an unearthly satin, and there was no other hue save where, at the low, black railway station—which seemed incredibly distant—one light gleamed like a tiny jewel. As the men floundered into a thigh-deep drift, it was known that the Swede was bawling out something. Scully went to him, put a hand on his shoulder, and projected an ear. "What's that you say?" he shouted.

"I say," bawled the Swede again, "I won't stand much show against this gang. I know you'll all pitch on me."

Scully smote him reproachfully on the arm. "Tut, man!" he yelled. The wind tore the words from Scully's lips and scattered them far alee.

"You are all a gang of—" boomed the Swede, but the storm also seized the remainder of this sentence.

Immediately turning their backs upon the wind, the men had swung around a corner to the sheltered side of the hotel. It was the function of the little house to preserve here, amid this great devastation of snow, an irregular V-shape of heavily encrusted grass, which crackled beneath the feet. One could imagine the great drifts piled against the windward side. When the party reached the comparative peace of this spot it was found that the Swede was still bellowing.

"Oh, I know what kind of a thing this is! I know you'll all pitch on me. I can't lick you all!"

Scully turned upon him panther-fashion. "You'll not have to whip all of us. You'll have to whip my son Johnnie. An' the man what troubles you durin' that time will have me to dale with."

The arrangements were swiftly made. The two

men faced each other, obedient to the harsh commands of Scully, whose face, in the subtly luminous gloom, could be seen set in the austere impersonal lines that are pictured on the countenances of the Roman veterans. The Easterner's teeth were chattering, and he was hopping up and down like a mechanical toy. The cowboy stood rock-like.

The contestants had not stripped off any clothing. Each was in his ordinary attire. Their fists were up, and they eyed each other in a calm that had the elements of leonine cruelty in it.

During this pause, the Easterner's mind, like a film, took lasting impressions of three men—the iron-nerved master of the ceremony; the Swede, pale, motionless, terrible; and Johnnie, serene yet ferocious, brutish yet heroic. The entire prelude had in it a tragedy greater than the tragedy of action, and this aspect was accentuated by the long, mellow cry of the blizzard, as it sped the tumbling and wailing flakes into the black abyss of the south.

"Now!" said Scully.

The two combatants leaped forward and crashed together like bullocks. There was heard the cushioned sound of blows, and of a curse squeezing out from between the tight teeth of one.

As for the spectators, the Easterner's pent-up breath exploded from him with a pop of relief, absolute relief from the tension of the preliminaries. The cowboy bounded into the air with a yowl. Scully was immovable as from supreme amazement and fear at the fury of the fight which he himself had permitted and arranged.

For a time the encounter in the darkness was such a perplexity of flying arms that it presented no more detail than would a swiftly revolving wheel. Occasionally a face, as if illumined by a flash of light, would shine out, ghastly and marked with pink spots. A moment later, the men might have been known as shadows, if it were not for the involuntary utterance of oaths that came from them in whispers.

Suddenly a holocaust of warlike desire caught the cowboy, and he bolted forward with the speed of a broncho. "Go it, Johnnie! go it! Kill him! Kill him!"

Scully confronted him. "Kape back," he said; and by his glance the cowboy could tell that this man was Johnnie's father.

To the Easterner there was a monotony of unchangeable fighting that was an abomination. This confused mingling was eternal to his sense, which was

concentrated in a longing for the end, the priceless end. Once the fighters lurched near him, and as he scrambled hastily backward he heard them breathe like men on the rack.

"Kill him, Johnnie! Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!" The cowboy's face was contorted like one of those agony masks in museums.

"Keep still," said Scully, icily.

Then there was a sudden loud grunt, incomplete, cut short, and Johnnie's body swung away from the Swede and fell with sickening heaviness to the grass. The cowboy was barely in time to prevent the mad Swede from flinging himself upon his prone adversary. "No, you don't," said the cowboy, interposing an arm. "Wait a second."

Scully was at his son's side. "Johnnie! Johnnie, me boy!" His voice had a quality of melancholy tenderness. "Johnnie! Can you go on with it?" He looked anxiously down into the bloody, pulpy face of his son.

There was a moment of silence, and then Johnnie answered in his ordinary voices, "Yes, I—it—yes."

Assisted by his father he struggled to his feet. "Wait a bit now till you git your wind," said the old man.

A few paces away the cowboy was lecturing the Swede. "No, you don't! Wait a second!"

The Easterner was plucking at Scully's sleeve. "Oh, this is enough," he pleaded. "This is enough! Let it go as it stands. This is enough!"

"Bill," said Scully, "git out of the road." The cowboy stepped aside. "Now." The combatants were actuated by a new caution as they advanced toward collision. They glared at each other, and then the Swede aimed a lightning blow that carried with it his entire weight. Johnnie was evidently half stupid from weakness, but he miraculously dodged, and his fist sent the overbalanced Swede sprawling.

The cowboy, Scully, and the Easterner burst into a cheer that was like a chorus of triumphant soldiery, but before its conclusion the Swede had scuffled agilely to his feet and come in berserk abandon at his foe. There was another perplexity of flying arms, and Johnnie's body again swung away and fell, even as a bundle might fall from a roof. The Swede instantly staggered to a little wind-waved tree and leaned upon it, breathing like an engine, while his savage and flame-lit eyes roamed from face to face as the men bent over Johnnie. There was a splendour of isolation in his situation at this time which the

Easterner felt once when, lifting his eyes from the man on the ground, he beheld that mysterious and lonely figure, waiting

"Are you any good yet, Johnnie?" asked Scully in a broken voice

The son gasped and opened his eyes languidly. After a moment he answered, "No—I ain't—any good—any—more." Then, from shame and bodily ill, he began to weep, the tears flowing down through the blood-stains on his face. "He was too—too—too heavy for me."

Scully straightened and addressed the waiting figure. "Stranger," he said, evenly, "it's all up with our side." Then his voice changed into that vibrant huskiness which is commonly the tone of the most simple and deadly announcements. "Johnnie is whipped."

Without replying, the victor moved off on the route to the front door of the hotel.

The cowboy was formulating new and unspellable 20 blasphemies. The Easterner was startled to find that they were out in a wind that seemed to come direct from the shadowed arctic flocs. He heard again the wail of the snow as it was flung to its grave in the south. He knew now that all this time the cold had been sinking into him deeper and deeper, and he wondered that he had not perished. He felt indifferent to the condition of the vanquished man.

"Johnnie, can you walk?" asked Scully.

"Did I hurt—hurt him any?" asked the son. 30

"Can you walk, boy? Can you walk?"

Johnnie's voice was suddenly strong. There was a robust impatience in it. "I asked you whether I hurt him any!"

"Yes, yes, Johnnie," answered the cowboy, consolingly; "he's hurt a good deal."

They raised him from the ground, and as soon as he was on his feet he went tottering off, rebuffing all attempts at assistance. When the party rounded the corner they were fairly blinded by the pelting of the 40 snow. It burned their faces like fire. The cowboy carried Johnnie through the drift to the door. As they entered, some cards again rose from the floor and beat against the wall.

The Easterner rushed to the stove. He was so profoundly chilled that he almost dared to embrace the glowing iron. The Swede was not in the room. Johnnie sank into a chair and, folding his arms on his knees, buried his face in them. Scully, warming one

foot and then the other at a rim of the stove, muttered to himself with Celtic mournfulness. The cowboy had removed his fur cap, and with a dazed and rueful air he was running one hand through his tousled locks. From overhead they could hear the creaking of boards, as the Swede tiamped here and there in his room.

The sad quiet was broken by the sudden flinging open of a door that led toward the kitchen. It was instantly followed by an inrush of women. They precipitated themselves upon Johnnie amid a chorus of lamentation. Before they carried their prey off to the kitchen, there to be bathed and harangued with that mixture of sympathy and abuse which is a feat of their sex, the mother straightened herself and fixed old Scully with an eye of stern reproach. "Shame be upon you, Patrick Scully!" she cried. "Your own son, too. Shame be upon you!"

"There, now! Be quiet, now!" said the old man, weakly.

"Shame be upon you, Patrick Scully!" The girls, rallying to this slogan, snifted disdainfully in the direction of those trembling accomplices, the cowboy and the Easterner. Presently they bore Johnnie away, and left the three men to dismal reflection.

VII

"I'd like to fight this here Dutchman myself," said the cowboy, breaking a long silence.

Scully wagged his head sadly. "No, that wouldn't do. It wouldn't be right. It wouldn't be right."

"Well, why wouldn't it?" argued the cowboy. "I don't see no harm in it."

"No," answered Scully, with mournful heroism. "It wouldn't be right. It was Johnnie's fight, and now we mustn't whip the man just because he whipped Johnnie."

"Yes, that's true enough," said the cowboy; "but—he better not get fresh with me, because I couldn't stand no more of it."

"You'll not say a word to him," commanded Scully, and even then they heard the tread of the Swede on the stairs. His entrance was made theatrical. He swept the door back with a bang and swaggered to the middle of the room. No one looked at him. "Well," he cried, insolently, at Scully, "I s'pose you'll tell me now how much I owe you?"

The old man remained stolid. "You don't owe me nothin'."

"Huh!" said the Swede, "huh! Don't owe 'im nothin'."

The cowboy addressed the Swede. "Stranger, I don't see how you come to be so gay around here."

Old Scully was instantly alert. "Stop!" he shouted, holding his hand forth, fingers upward. "Bill, you shut up!"

The cowboy spat carelessly into the sawdust-box. "I didn't say a word, did I?" he asked.

"Mr. Scully," called the Swede, "how much do I owe you?" It was seen that he was attired for departure, and that he had his valise in his hand.

"You don't owe me nothin'," repeated Scully in the same imperturbable way.

"Huh!" said the Swede. "I guess you're right. I guess if it was any way at all, you'd owe me something. That's what I guess." He turned to the cowboy. "'Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!'" he mimicked, and then guffawed victoriously. "'Kill him!'" He was convulsed with ironical humour.

But he might have been jeering the dead. The three men were immovable and silent, staring with glassy eyes at the stove.

The Swede opened the door and passed into the storm, giving one derisive glance backward at the still group.

As soon as the door was closed, Scully and the cowboy leaped to their feet and began to curse. They trampled to and fro, waving their arms and smashing into the air with their fists. "Oh, but that was a hard minute!" wailed Scully. "That was a hard minute! Him there leerin' and scoffin'! One bang at his nose was worth forty dollars to me that minute! How did you stand it, Bill?"

"How did I stand it?" cried the cowboy in quivering voice. "How did I stand it? Oh!"

The old man burst into sudden brogue. "I'd loike to take that Swade," he wailed, "and hould 'im down on a shtone flure and bate 'im to a jelly wid a shtick!"

The cowboy groaned in sympathy. "I'd like to git him by the neck and ha-ammer him"—he brought his hand down on a chair with a noise like a pistol-shot—"hammer that there Dutchman until he couldn't tell himself from a dead coyote!"

"I'd bate 'im until he—"

"I'd show *him* some things—"

And then together they raised a yearning, fanatic cry—"Oh-o-oh! if we only could—"

"Yes!"

"Yes!"

"And then I'd—"

"O-o-oh!"

VIII

The Swede, tightly gripping his valise, tacked across the face of the storm as if he carried sails. He was following a line of little naked, gasping trees which, he knew, must mark the way of the road. His face, fresh from the pounding of Johnnie's fists, felt more pleasure than pain in the wind and the driving snow. A number of square shapes loomed upon him finally, and he knew them as the houses of the main body of the town. He found a street and made travel along it, leaning heavily upon the wind whenever, at a corner, a terrific blast caught him.

He might have been in a deserted village. We picture the world as thick with conquering and elate humanity, but here, with the bugles of the tempest pealing, it was hard to imagine a peopled earth. One viewed the existence of man then as a marvel, and conceded a glamour of wonder to these lice which were caused to cling to a whirling, fire-smitten, ice-locked, disease-stricken, space-lost bulb. The conceit of man was explained by this storm to be the very engine of life. One was a coxcomb not to die in it. However, the Swede found a saloon.

In front of it an indomitable red light was burning, and the snowflakes were made blood-colour as they flew through the circumscribed territory of the lamp's shining. The Swede pushed open the door of the saloon and entered. A sanded expanse was before him, and at the end of it four men sat about a table drinking. Down one side of the room extended a radiant bar, and its guardian was leaning upon his elbows listening to the talk of the men at the table. The Swede dropped his valise upon the floor and, smiling fraternally upon the barkeeper, said, "Gimme some whisky, will you?" The man placed a bottle, a whisky-glass, and a glass of ice-thick water upon the bar. The Swede poured himself an abnormal portion of whisky and drank it in three gulps. "Pretty bad night," remarked the bartender, indifferently. He was making the pretension of blindness which is usually a distinction of his class; but it could have been seen that he was furtively studying the half-erased blood-stains on the face of the Swede. "Bad night," he said again.

"Oh, it's good enough for me," replied the Swede, hardly, as he poured himself some more whisky. The barkeeper took his coin and manœuvred it through its reception by the highly nickelled cash-machine. A bell rang, a card labelled "20 cts" had appeared.

"No," continued the Swede, "this isn't too bad weather. It's good enough for me."

"So?" murmured the barkeeper, languidly.

The copious damps made the Swede's eyes swim, and he breathed a trifle heavier. "Yes, I like this weather. I like it. It suits me." It was apparently his design to impart a deep significance to these words.

"So?" murmured the bartender again. He turned to gaze dreamily at the scroll-like birds and bird-like scrolls which had been drawn with soap upon the mirrors in back of the bar.

"Well, I guess I'll take another drink," said the Swede, presently. "Have something?"

"No, thanks, I'm not drinkin'," answered the bartender. Afterward he asked, "How did you hurt your face?"

The Swede immediately began to boast loudly. "Why, in a fight. I thumped the soul out of a man down here at Scully's hotel."

The interest of the four men at the table was at last aroused.

"Who was it?" said one.

"Johnnie Scully," blustered the Swede. "Son of the man what runs it. He will be pretty near dead for some weeks, I can tell you. I made a nice thing of him, I did. He couldn't get up. They carried him in the house. Have a drink?"

Instantly the men in some subtle way encased themselves in reserve. "No, thanks," said one. The group was of curious formation. Two were prominent local business men, one was the district attorney; and one was a professional gambler of the kind known as "square." But a scrutiny of the group would not have enabled an observer to pick the gambler from the men of more reputable pursuits. He was, in fact, a man so delicate in manner, when among people of fair class, and so judicious in his choice of victims, that in the strictly masculine part of the town's life he had come to be explicitly trusted and admired. People called him a thoroughbred. The fear and contempt with which his craft was regarded were undoubtedly the reason why his quiet dignity shone conspicuous above the quiet dignity of men who

might be merely hatters, billiard-keepers, or grocery clerks. Beyond an occasional unwary traveller who came by rail, this gambler was supposed to prey solely upon reckless and senile farmers, who, when flush with good crops, drove into town in all the pride and confidence of an absolutely invulnerable stupidity. Hearing at times in cucutous fashion of the despoilment of such a farmer, the important men of Romper invariably laughed in contempt of the victim, and if they thought of the wolf at all, it was with a kind of pride at the knowledge that he would never dare think of attacking their wisdom and courage. Besides, it was popular that this gambler had a real wife and two real children in a neat cottage in a suburb, where he led an exemplary home life, and when any one even suggested a discrepancy in his character, the crowd immediately vociferated descriptions of this virtuous family circle. Then men who led exemplary home lives, and men who did not lead exemplary home lives, all subsided in a bunch, remarking that there was nothing more to be said.

However, when a restriction was placed upon him—as, for instance, when a strong clique of members of the new Pollywog Club refused to permit him, even as a spectator, to appear in the rooms of the organization—the candour and gentleness with which he accepted the judgment disarmed many of his foes and made his friends more desperately partisan. He invariably distinguished between himself and a respectable Romper man so quickly and frankly that his manner actually appeared to be a continual broadcast compliment.

And one must not forget to declare the fundamental fact of his entire position in Romper. It is irrefutable that in all affairs outside his business, in all matters that occur eternally and commonly between man and man, this thieving card-player was so generous, so just, so moral, that, in a contest, he could have put to flight the consciences of nine tenths of the citizens of Romper.

And so it happened that he was seated in this saloon with the two prominent local merchants and the district attorney.

The Swede continued to drink raw whisky, meanwhile babbling at the barkeeper and trying to induce him to indulge in potations. "Come on. Have a drink. Come on. What—no? Well, have a little one, then. By gawd, I've whipped a man to-night, and I want to celebrate. I whipped him good, too. Gentle-

men," the Swede cried to the men at the table, "have a drink?"

"Ssh!" said the barkeeper.

The group at the table, although furtively attentive, had been pretending to be deep in talk, but now a man lifted his eyes toward the Swede and said, shortly, "Thanks. We don't want any more."

At this reply the Swede ruffled out his chest like a rooster. "Well," he exploded, "it seems I can't get anybody to drink with me in this town. Seems so, 10 don't it? Well!"

"Ssh!" said the barkeeper.

"Say," snarled the Swede, "don't you try to shut me up. I won't have it. I'm a gentleman, and I want people to drink with me. And I want 'em to drink with me now. Now—do you understand?" He rapped the bar with his knuckles.

Years of experience had calloused the bartender. He merely grew sulky. "I hear you," he answered.

"Well," cried the Swede, "listen hard then. See 20 those men over there? Well, they're going to drink with me, and don't you forget it. Now you watch."

"Hi!" yelled the barkeeper, "this won't do!"

"Why won't it?" demanded the Swede. He stalked over to the table, and by chance laid his hand upon the shoulder of the gambler. "How about this?" he asked wrathfully. "I asked you to drink with me."

The gambler simply twisted his head and spoke over his shoulder. "My friend, I don't know you."

"Oh, hell!" answered the Swede, "come and have 30 a drink."

"Now, my boy," advised the gambler, kindly, "take your hand off my shoulder and go 'way and mind your own business." He was a little, slim man, and it seemed strange to hear him use this tone of heroic patronage to the burly Swede. The other men at the table said nothing.

"What! You won't drink with me, you little dude? I'll make you, then! I'll make you!" The Swede had grasped the gambler frenziedly at the throat, and was 40 dragging him from his chair. The other men sprang up. The barkeeper dashed around the corner of his bar. There was a great tumult, and then was seen a long blade in the hand of the gambler. It shot forward, and a human body, this citadel of virtue, wisdom, power, was pierced as easily as if it had been a melon. The Swede fell with a cry of supreme astonishment.

The prominent merchants and the district attor-

ney must have at once tumbled out of the place backward. The bartender found himself hanging limply to the arm of a chair and gazing into the eyes of a murderer.

"Henry," said the latter, as he wiped his knife on one of the towels that hung beneath the bar rail, "you tell 'em where to find me. I'll be home, waiting for 'em." Then he vanished. A moment afterward the barkeeper was in the street dinning through the storm for help and, moreover, companionship.

The corpse of the Swede, alone in the saloon, had its eyes fixed upon a dreadful legend that dwelt atop of the cash-machine: "This registers the amount of your purchase."

IX

Months later, the cowboy was frying pork over the stove of a little ranch near the Dakota line, when there was a quick thud of hoofs outside, and presently the Easterner entered with the letters and the papers.

"Well," said the Easterner at once, "the chap that killed the Swede has got three years. Wasn't much, was it?"

"He has? Three years?" The cowboy poised his pan of pork, while he ruminated upon the news. "Three years. That ain't much."

"No. It was a light sentence," replied the Easterner as he unbuckled his spurs. "Seems there was a good deal of sympathy for him in Romper."

"If the bartender had been any good," observed the cowboy, thoughtfully, "he would have gone in and cracked that there Dutchman on the head with a bottle in the beginnin' of it and stopped all this here murderin'."

"Ycs, a thousand things might have happened," said the Easterner, tartly.

The cowboy returned his pan of pork to the fire, but his philosophy continued. "It's funny, ain't it? If he hadn't said Johnnie was cheatin' he'd be alive this minute. He was an awful fool. Game played for fun, too. Not for money. I believe he was crazy."

"I feel sorry for that gambler," said the Easterner. "Oh, so do I," said the cowboy. "He don't deserve none of it for killin' who he did."

"The Swede might not have been killed if everything had been square."

"Might not have been killed?" exclaimed the cowboy. "Everythin' square? Why, when he said that

Johnnie was cheatin' and acted like such a jackass? And then in the saloon he fairly walked up to git hurt?" With these arguments the cowboy browbeat the Easterner and reduced him to rage

"You're a fool!" cried the Easterner, viciously "You're a bigger jackass than the Swede by a million majority Now let me tell you one thing Let me tell you something Listen! Johnnie was cheating!"

"Johnnie," said the cowboy, blankly There was a minute of silence, and then he said, robustly, 10 "Why, no The game was only for fun "

"Fun or not," said the Easterner, "Johnnie was cheating I saw him I know it I saw him And I refused to stand up and be a man I let the Swede fight it out alone And you—you were simply puffing

around the place and wanting to fight And then old Scully himself! We are all in it! This poor gambler isn't even a noun He is kind of an adverb Every sin is the result of a collaboration We, five of us, have collaborated in the murder of this Swede. Usually there are from a dozen to forty women really involved in every murder, but in this case it seems to be only five men—you, I, Johnnie, old Scully, and that fool of an unfortunate gambler came merely as a culmination, the apex of a human movement, and gets all the punishment."

The cowboy, injured and rebellious, cried out blindly into this fog of mysterious theory: "Well, I didn't do anythin', did I?"

FATHER. But he took me into partnership, don't forget—

MOTHER. (*sharply*) Because you were the brains! Because he was afraid of losing you! (*A pause*).

BILLY. (*admiringly*) Dion came in his old clothes on a bet with me. He's a real sport. He wouldn't have been afraid to appear in his pajamas! (*He grins with appreciation*).

MOTHER. Isn't the moonlight clear! (*She goes and sits on the center bench. BILLY stands at the left 10 corner, forward, his hand on the rail, like a prisoner at the bar, facing the judge. His FATHER stands in front of the bench on right. The MOTHER announces, with finality*) After he's through college, Billy must study for a profession of some sort, I'm determined on that! (*She turns to her husband, defiantly, as if expecting opposition*).

FATHER. (*eagerly and placatingly*) Just what I've been thinking, my dear. Architecture! How's that? Billy a first-rate, number-one architect! That's my 20 proposition! What I've always wished I could have been myself! Only I never had the opportunity. But Billy—we'll make him a partner in the firm after. Anthony, Brown and Son, architects and builders—instead of contractors and builders!

MOTHER. (*yearning for the realization of a dream*) And we won't lay sidewalks—or dig sewers—ever again?

FATHER. (*a bit ruffled*) I and Anthony can build anything your pet can draw—even if it's a church! 30 (*Then, selling his idea*) It's a great chance for him! He'll design—expand us—make the firm famous.

MOTHER. (*to the air—musingly*) When you proposed, I thought your future promised success—my future—(*with a sigh*)—Well, I suppose we've been comfortable. Now, it's his future. How would Billy like to be an architect? (*She does not look at him*).

BILLY. (*to her*) All right, Mother. (*Then sheepishly*) I guess I've never bothered much about what I'd like to do after college—but architecture sounds 40 all right to me, I guess.

MOTHER. (*to the air—proudly*) Billy used to draw houses when he was little.

FATHER. (*joyfully*) Billy's got the stuff in him to win, if he'll only work hard enough.

BILLY. (*dutifully*) I'll work hard, Dad.

MOTHER. Billy can do anything!

BILLY. (*embarrassed*) I'll try, Mother. (*There is a pause*).

MOTHER. (*with a sudden shiver*) The nights are so much colder than they used to be! Think of it, I once went moonlight bathing in June when I was a girl—but the moonlight was so warm and beautiful in those days, do you remember, Father?

FATHER. (*puts his arm around her affectionately*) You bet I do, Mother. (*He kisses her. The orchestra at the Casino strikes up a waltz*) There's the music. Let's go back and watch the young folks dance. (*They start off, leaving BILLY standing there*).

MOTHER. (*suddenly calls back over her shoulder*) I want to watch Billy dance.

BILLY. (*dutifully*) Yes, Mother! (*He follows them. For a moment the faint sound of the music and the lapping of waves is heard. Then footsteps again and the three ANTHONYS come in. First come the FATHER and MOTHER, who are not masked. The FATHER is a tall lean man of fifty-five or sixty with a grim, defensive face, obstinate to the point of stupid weakness. The MOTHER is a thin frail faded woman, her manner perpetually nervous and distraught, but with a sweet and gentle face that had once been beautiful. The FATHER wears an ill-fitting black suit, like a mourner. The MOTHER wears a cheap, plain, black dress. Following them, as if he were a stranger, walking alone, is their son, DION. He is about the same height as young BROWN but lean and wiry, without repose, continually in restless nervous movement. His face is masked. The mask is a fixed forcing of his own face 50—dark, spiritual, poetic, passionately supersensitive, helplessly unprotected in its childlike, religious faith in life—into the expression of a mocking, reckless, defiant, gayly scoffing and sensual young Pan. He is dressed in a gray flannel shirt, open at the neck, sneakers over bare feet, and soiled white flannel trousers. The FATHER strides to the center bench and sits down. The MOTHER, who has been holding to his arm, lets go and stands by the bench at the right. They both stare at DION, who, with a studied carelessness, takes his place at the rail, where young BROWN had stood. They watch him, with queer, puzzled eyes.*

MOTHER. (*suddenly—pleading*) You simply must send him to college!

FATHER. I won't. I don't believe in it. Colleges turn out lazy loafers to sponge on their poor old fathers! Let him slave like I had to! That'll teach him the value of a dollar! College'll only make him a bigger fool than he is already! I never got above grammar school but I've made money and established a sound

business Let him make a man out of himself like I made of myself!

DION (*mockingly—to the air*) This Mr. Anthony is my father, but he only imagines he is God the Father (*They both stare at him*)

FATHER (*with angry bewilderment*) What—what—what's that?

MOTHER (*gently remonstrating to her son*) Dion, dear! (*Then to her husband—tauntingly*) Brown takes all the credit! He tells everyone the success is all due to his energy—that you're only an old stick-in-the-mud!

FATHER (*stung, harshly*) The damn fool! He knows better'n anyone if I hadn't held him down to common sense, with his crazy wild-cat notions, he'd have had us ruined long ago!

MOTHER He's sending Billy to college—Mrs. Brown just told me—going to have him study architecture afterwards, too, so's he can help expand your firm!

FATHER. (*angrily*) What's that? (*Suddenly turns on DION furiously*) Then you can make up your mind to go, too! And you'll learn to be a better architect than Brown's boy or I'll turn you out in the gutter without a penny! You hear?

DION (*mockingly—to the air*) It's difficult to choose—but architecture sounds less laborious

MOTHER (*fondly*) You ought to make a wonderful architect, Dion. You've always painted pictures so well—

DION (*with a start—resentfully*) Why must she lie? Is it my fault? She knows I only try to paint. (*Passionately*) But I will, some day! (*Then quickly, mocking again*) On to college! Well, it won't be home, anyway, will it? (*He laughs queerly and approaches them* His FATHER gets up defensively DION bows to him) I thank Mr. Anthony for this splendid opportunity to create myself— (*He kisses his mother, who bows with a strange humility as if she were a servant being saluted by the young master—then adds lightly*)—in my mother's image, so she may feel her life comfortably concluded (*He sits in his FATHER's place at center and his mask stares with a frozen mockery before him. They stand on each side, looking dumbly at him*).

MOTHER (*at last, with a shiver*) It's cold June didn't use to be cold. I remember the June when I was carrying you, Dion—three months before you were born. (*She stares up at the sky*) The moonlight

was warm, then I could feel the night wrapped around me like a gray velvet gown lined with warm sky and trimmed with silver leaves!

FATHER (*gruffly—but with a certain awe*) My mother used to believe the full of the moon was the time to sow. She was terrible old-fashioned (*With a grunt*) I can feel it's bringing on my rheumatism. Let's go back indoors.

DION (*with intense bitterness*) Hide! Be ashamed! (*They both start and stare at him*)

FATHER (*with bitter hopelessness To his wife—indicating their son*) Who is he? You bore him!

MOTHER (*proudly*) He's my boy! He's Dion!

DION (*bitterly resentful*) What else, indeed! The identical son! (*Then mockingly*) Are Mr. Anthony and his wife going in to dance? The nights grow cold! The days are dimmer than they used to be! Let's play hide-and-seek! Seek the monkey in the moon! (*He suddenly cuts a grotesque caper, like a harlequin and darts off, laughing with forced abandon* They stare after him—then slowly follow. Again there is silence except for the sound of the lapping waves. Then MARGARET comes in, followed by the humbly worshipping BILLY BROWN. She is almost seventeen, pretty and vivacious, blonde, with big romantic eyes, her figure lithe and strong, her facial expression intelligent but youthfully dreamy, especially now in the moonlight. She is in a simple white dress. On her entrance, her face is masked with an exact, almost transparent reproduction of her own features, but giving her the abstract quality of a Girl instead of the individual, MARGARET).

MARGARET (*looking upward at the moon and singing in low tone as they enter*) "Ah, moon of my delight that knowest no wane!"²

BILLY (*eagerly*) I've got that record—John McCormack. It's a peach! Sing some more. (*She looks upward in silence. He keeps standing respectfully in back of her, glancing embarrassedly toward her averted face. He tries to make conversation*) I think the *Rubáiyát's* great stuff, don't you? I never could memorize poetry worth a darn. Dion can recite lots of Shelley's poems by heart.

MARGARET. (*slowly takes off her mask—to the moon*) Dion! (*A pause*).

BILLY. (*fidgeting*) Margaret!

MARGARET. (*to the moon*) Dion is so wonderful!

² Edward Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam's *Rubáiyát*.

BILLY. (*blunderingly*) I asked you to come out here because I wanted to tell you something.

MARGARET. (*to the moon*) Why did Dion look at me like that? It made me feel so crazy!

BILLY. I wanted to ask you something, too.

MARGARET. That one time he kissed me—I can't forget it! He was only joking—but I felt—and he saw and just laughed!

BILLY. Because that's the uncertain part. My end of it is a sure thing, and has been for a long time, and I guess everybody in town knows it—they're always kidding me—so it's a cinch you must know—how I feel about you.

MARGARET. Dion's so different from all the others. He can paint beautifully and write poetry and he plays and sings and dances so marvelously. But he's sad and shy, too, just like a baby sometimes, and he understands what I'm really like inside—and—and I'd love to run my fingers through his hair—and I love him! Yes, I love him! (*She stretches out her arms to the moon*) Oh, Dion, I love you!

BILLY. I love you, Margaret.

MARGARET. I wonder if Dion—I saw him looking at me again tonight—Oh, I wonder . . . !

BILLY. (*takes her hand and blurts out*) Can't you love me? Won't you marry me—after college—

MARGARET. Where is Dion now, I wonder?

BILLY. (*shaking her hand in an agony of uncertainty*) Margaret! Please answer me!

MARGARET. (*her dream broken, puts on her mask* ³⁰ *and turns to him—matter-of-factly*) It's getting chilly. Let's go back and dance, Billy.

BILLY. (*desperately*) I love you! (*He tries clumsily to kiss her*).

MARGARET. (*with an amused laugh*) Like a brother! You can kiss me if you like. (*She kisses him*) A big-brother kiss. It doesn't count. (*He steps back crushed, with head bowed. She turns away and takes off her mask—to the moon*) I wish Dion would kiss me again!

BILLY. (*painfully*) I'm a poor boob. I ought to know better. I'll bet I know. You're in love with Dion. I've seen you look at him. Isn't that it?

MARGARET. Dion! I love the sound of it!

BILLY. (*huskily*) Well—he's always been my best friend—I'm glad it's him—and I guess I know how to lose—(*He takes her hand and shakes it*)—so here's wishing you all the success and happiness in the world, Margaret—and remember I'll always be

your best friend! (*He gives her hand a final shake—swallows hard—then manfully*) Let's go back in!

MARGARET. (*to the moon—faintly annoyed*) What is Billy Brown doing here? I'll go down to the end of the dock and wait. Dion is the moon and I'm the sea. I want to feel the moon kissing the sea. I want Dion to leave the sky to me. I want the tides of my blood to leave my heart and follow him! (*She whispers like a little girl*) Dion! Margaret! Peggy! Peggy is Dion's girl—Peggy is Dion's little girl—(*She sings laughingly, elfishly*) Dion is my Daddy—O! (*She is walking toward the end of the dock, off left*).

BILLY. (*who has turned away*) I'm going. I'll tell Dion you're here.

MARGARET. (*more and more strongly and assertively, until at the end she is a wife and a mother*) And I'll be Mrs. Dion—Dion's wife—and he'll be my Dion—²my own Dion—my little boy—my baby! The moon is drowned in the tides of my heart, and peace sinks deep through the sea! (*She disappears off left, her upturned unmasked face like that of a rapturous visionary. There is silence again, in which the dance music is heard. Then this stops and DION comes in. He walks quickly to the bench at center and throws himself on it, hiding his masked face in his hands. After a moment, he lifts his head, peers about, listens huntedly, then slowly takes off his mask. His real face is revealed in the bright moonlight, shrinking, shy and gentle, full of a deep sadness*).

DION. (*with a suffering bewilderment*) Why am I afraid to dance, I who love music and rhythm and grace and song and laughter? Why am I afraid to live, I who love life and the beauty of flesh and the living colors of earth and sky and sea? Why am I afraid of love, I who love love? Why am I afraid, I who am not afraid? Why must I pretend to scorn in order to pity? Why must I hide myself in self-contempt in order to understand? Why must I be so ⁴⁰ashamed of my strength, so proud of my weakness? Why must I live in a cage like a criminal, defying and hating, I who love peace and friendship? (*Clasping his hands above in supplication*) Why was I born without a skin, O God, that I must wear armor in order to touch or to be touched? (*A second's pause of waiting silence—then he suddenly claps his mask over his face again, with a gesture of despair and his voice becomes bitter and sardonic*) Or rather, Old Graybeard, why the devil was I ever born at all?

(Steps are heard from the right DION stiffens and his mask stares straight ahead BILLY comes in from the right He is shuffling along disconsolately When he sees DION, he stops abruptly and glowers resentfully—but at once the "good loser" in him conquers this)

BILLY (embarrassedly) Hello, Dion I've been looking all over for you (He sits down on the bench at right, forcing a joking tone) What are you sitting here for, you nut—trying to get more moonstruck? 10 (A pause—awkwardly) I just left Margaret—

DION (gives a start—immediately defensively mocking) Bless you, my children!

BILLY (gruffly and slangily) I'm out of it—she gave me the gate You're the original white-haired boy Go on in and win! We've been chums ever since we were kids, haven't we?—and—I'm glad it's you, Dion (This huskily—he fumbles for DION's hand and gives it a shake)

DION (letting his hand fall back—bitterly) 20 Chums? Oh, no, Billy Brown would despise me!

BILLY. She's waiting for you now, down at the end of the dock.

DION For me? Which? Who? Oh, no, girls only allow themselves to look at what is seen!

BILLY. She's in love with you.

DION (moved—a pause—stammers) Miracle? I'm afraid! (he chants flippantly) I love, thou lovest, he loves, she loves! She loves, she loves—what?

BILLY And I know damn well, underneath your 30 nuttiness, you're gone on her.

DION. (moved) Underneath? I love love! I'd love to be loved! But I'm afraid! (Then aggressively) Was afraid! Not now! Now I can make love—to anyone! Yes, I love Peggy! Why not? Who is she? Who am I? We love, you love, they love, one loves! No one loves! All the world loves a lover, God loves us all and we love Him! Love is a word—a shameless ragged ghost of a word—begging at all doors for life at any price!

BILLY (always as if he hadn't listened to what the other said) Say, let's you and me room together at college—

DION Billy wants to remain by her side!

BILLY It's a bet, then! (Forcing a grin) You can tell her I'll see that you behave! (Turns away) So long. Remember she's waiting (He goes).

DION (dazedly, to himself) Waiting—waiting for me! (He slowly removes his mask. His face is torn

and transfigured by joy He stares at the sky raptly) O God in the moon, did you hear? She loves me! I am not afraid! I am strong! I can love! She protects me! Her arms are softly around me! She is warmly around me! She is my skin! She is my armor! Now I am born—I—the I—one and indivisible—I who love Margaret! (He glances at his mask triumphantly—in tones of deliverance) You are outgrown! I am beyond you! (He stretches out his arms to the sky) O God, now I believe! (From the end of the wharf, her voice is heard)

MARGARET Dion

DION (raptly) Margaret!

MARGARET (nearer) Dion!

DION Margaret!

MARGARET DION! (She comes running in, her mask in her hands He springs toward her with outstretched arms but she shrinks away with a frightened shriek and hastily puts on her mask DION starts back. She speaks coldly and angrily) Who are you? Why are you calling me? I don't know you!

DION (heart-brokenly) I love you!

MARGARET. (freezingly) Is this a joke—or are you drunk?

DION. (with a final pleading whisper) Margaret! (But she only glares at him contemptuously Then with a sudden gesture he claps his mask on and laughs wildly and bitterly) Ha-ha-ha! That's one on you, Peg!

MARGARET (with delight, pulling off her mask) Dion! How did you ever— Why, I never knew you!

DION. (puts his arm around her boldly) How? It's the moon—the crazy moon—the monkey in the moon—playing jokes on us! (He kisses her with his masked face with a romantic actor's passion again and again) You love me! You know you do! Say it! Tell me! I want to hear! I want to feel! I want to know! I want to want! To want you as you want me!

40 MARGARET. (in ecstasy) Oh, Dion, I do! I do love you!

DION. (with ironic mastery—rhetorically) And I love you! Oh, madly! Oh, forever and ever, amen! You are my evening star and all my Pleiades! Your eyes are blue pools in which gold dreams glide, your body is a young white birch leaning backward beneath the lips of spring So! (He has bent her back, his arms supporting her, his face above hers) So! (He kisses her).

MARGARET. (*with overpowering passionate languor*)
Oh, Dion! Dion! I love you!

Act One

Scene One

DION. (*with more and more mastery in his tone*)
I love, you love, we love! Come! Rest! Relax! Let go
your clutch on the world! Dim and dimmer! Fading
out in the past behind! Gone! Death! Now! Be born!
Awake! Live! Dissolve into dew—into silence—into
night—into earth—into space—into peace—into
meaning—into joy—into God—into the Great God
Pan! (*While he has been speaking, the moon has* 10
passed gradually behind a black cloud, its light fading
out. There is a moment of intense blackness and
silence. Then the light gradually comes on again.
DION'S voice, at first in a whisper, then increasing in
volume with the light, is heard) Wake up! Time to
get up! Time to exist! Time for school! Time to
learn! Learn to pretend! Cover your nakedness! Learn
to lie! Learn to keep step! Join the procession! Great
Pan is dead! Be ashamed!

MARGARET. (*with a sob*) Oh, Dion, I am ashamed! 20

DION. (*mockingly*) Sssshh! Watch the monkey in
the moon! See him dance! His tail is a piece of string
that was left when he broke loose from Jehovah and
ran away to join Charley Darwin's circus!

MARGARET. I know you must hate me now! (*She*
throws her arms around him and hides her head on
his shoulder).

DION. (*deeply moved*) Don't cry! Don't—! (*He*
suddenly tears off his mask—in a passionate agony)
Hate you? I love you with all my soul! Love me! 30
Why can't you love me, Margaret? (*He tries to kiss*
her but she jumps to her feet with a frightened cry
holding up her mask before her face protectingly).

MARGARET. Don't! Please! I don't know you! You
frighten me!

DION. (*puts on his mask again—quietly and bit-*
terly) All's well. I'll never let you see again. (*He puts*
his arm around her—gently mocking) By proxy, I
love you. There! Don't cry! Don't be afraid! Dion
Anthony will marry you some day. (*He kisses her*) "I 40
take this woman—" (*Tenderly joking*) Hello,
woman! Do you feel older by æons? Mrs. Dion
Anthony, shall we go in and may I have the next
dance?

MARGARET. (*tenderly*) You crazy child! (*Then,*
laughing with joy) Mrs. Dion Anthony! It sounds
wonderful, doesn't it? (*They go out as*

SCENE. Seven years later.

The sitting room of MRS. DION ANTHONY's half of a
two-family house in the homes section of the town—
one of those one-design districts that daze the eye
with multiplied ugliness. The four pieces of furniture
shown are in keeping—an armchair at left, a table
with a chair in back of it at center, a sofa at right.
The same court-room effect of the arrangement of
benches in Act One is held to here. The background
is a backdrop on which the rear wall is painted with
the intolerable lifeless realistic detail of the stereo-
typed paintings which usually adorn the sitting rooms
of such houses. It is late afternoon of a gray day in
winter.

DION is sitting behind the table, staring before him.
The mask hangs on his breast below his neck, giving
the effect of two faces. His real face has aged greatly,
grown more strained and tortured, but at the same
time, in some queer way, more selfless and ascetic,
more fixed in its resolute withdrawal from life. The
mask, too, has changed. It is older, more defiant and
mocking, its sneer more forced and bitter, its Pan
quality becoming Mephistophelean. It has already be-
gun to show the ravages of dissipation.

DION. (*suddenly reaches out and takes up a copy*
of the New Testament which is on the table and,
putting a finger in at random, opens and reads aloud
the text at which it points) "Come unto me all ye
who are heavy laden and I will give you rest." ^a (*He*
stares before him in a sort of trance, his face lighted
up from within but painfully confused—in an uncer-
tain whisper) I will come—but where are you,
Savior? (*The noise of the outer door shutting is*
heard. DION starts and claps the mocking mask on his
face again. He tosses the Testament aside contemptu-
ously) Blah! Fixation on old Mama Christianity!
You infant blubbering in the dark, you! (*He laughs,*
with a bitter self-contempt. Footsteps approach. He
picks up a newspaper and hides behind it hurriedly.
MARGARET enters. She is dressed in stylish, expensive
clothes and a fur coat, which look as if they had been
remodeled and seen service. She has grown mature
and maternal, in spite of her youth. Her pretty face is
still fresh and healthy but there is the beginning of a

^a Matthew xi:28.

THE CURTAIN FALLS)

permanently worried, apprehensive expression about the nose and mouth—an uncomprehending hurt in her eyes DION pretends to be engrossed in his paper. She bends down and kisses him)

MARGARET (with a forced gaiety) Good morning—at four in the afternoon! You were snoring when I left!

DION (puts his arms around her with a negligent, accustomed gesture—mockingly) The Ideal Husband!

MARGARET (already preoccupied with another thought—comes and sits in chair on left) I was afraid the children would disturb you, so I took them over to Mrs. Young's to play (A pause He picks up the paper again She asks anxiously) I suppose they'll be all right over there, don't you? (He doesn't answer She is more hurt than offended) I wish you'd try to take more interest in the children, Dion

DION (mockingly) Become a father—before breakfast? I'm in too delicate a condition (She turns away, hurt Penitently he pats her hand—vaguely) All right I'll try

MARGARET. (squeezing his hand—with possessive tenderness) Play with them. You're a bigger kid than they are—underneath.

DION (self-mockingly—flipping the Bible) Underneath—I'm becoming downright infantile! "Suffer these little ones!"⁴

MARGARET (keeping to her certainty) You're my oldest

DION (with mocking appreciation) She puts the Kingdom of Heaven in its place!

MARGARET. (withdrawing her hand) I was serious.

DION. So was I—about something or other (He laughs) This domestic diplomacy! We communicate in code—when neither has the other's key!

MARGARET. (frowns confusedly—then forcing a playful tone) I want to have a serious talk with you, young man! In spite of your promises, you've kept up the hard drinking and gambling you started the last 40 year abroad.

DION From the time I realized it wasn't in me to be an artist—except in living—and not even in that! (He laughs bitterly)

MARGARET. (with conviction) But you can paint, Dion—beautifully!

DION. (with deep pain) No! (He suddenly takes her hand and kisses it gratefully) I love Margaret!

Her blindness surpasseth all understanding! (Then bitterly)—or is it pity?

MARGARET We've only got about one hundred dollars left in the bank

DION (with dazed surprise) What! Is all the money from the sale of the house gone?

MARGARET (wearily) Every day or so you've been cashing checks You've been drinking—you haven't counted—

10 DION (irritably) I know! (A pause—soberly) No more estate to fall back on, eh? Well, for five years it kept us living abroad in peace It bought us a little happiness—of a kind—didn't it?—living and loving and having children—(A slight pause—bitterly)—thinking one was creating before one discovered one couldn't!

MARGARET. (this time with forced conviction) But you can paint—beautifully!

DION. (angrily) Shut up! (A pause—then jeeringly) So my wife thinks it behooves me to settle down and support my family in the meager style to which they'll have to become accustomed?

MARGARET (shamefacedly) I didn't say—still—something's got to be done.

DION (harshly) Will Mrs. Anthony helpfully suggest what?

MARGARET I met Billy Brown on the street He said you'd have made a good architect, if you'd stuck to it.

30 DION. Flatterer! Instead of leaving college when my Old Man died? Instead of marrying Peggy and going abroad and being happy?

MARGARET (as if she hadn't heard) He spoke of how well you used to draw

DION. Billy was in love with Margaret at one time

MARGARET. He wanted to know why you've never been in to see him.

DION. He's bound heaven-bent for success. It's the will of Mammon! Anthony and Brown, contractors and builders—death subtracts Anthony and I sell out—Billy graduates—Brown and Son, architects and builders—old man Brown perishes of paternal pride—and now we have William A. Brown, architect! Why his career itself already has an architectural design! One of God's mud pies!

MARGARET. He particularly told me to ask you to drop in.

DION. (springs to his feet—assertively) No! Pride! I have been alive!

⁴ Cf. Mark x:14

MARGARET. Why don't you have a talk with him?

DION. Pride in my failure!

MARGARET. You were always such close friends.

DION. (*more and more desperately*) The pride which came after man's fall—by which he laughs as a creator at his self-defcats!

MARGARET. Not for my sake—but for your own—and, above all, for the children's!

DION. (*with terrible despair*) Pride! Pride without 10 which the Gods are worms!

MARGARET. (*after a pause, meekly and humbly*) You don't want to? It would hurt you? All right, dear. Never mind. We'll manage somehow—you mustn't worry—you must start your beautiful painting again—and I can get that position in the library—it would be such fun for me working there! . . . (*She reaches out and takes his hand—tenderly*) I love you, dear. I understand.

DION. (*slumps down into his chair, crushed, his 20 face averted from hers, as hers is from him, although their hands are still clasped—in a trembling, expiring voice*) Pride is dying! (*As if he were suffocating, he pulls the mask from his resigned, pale, suffering face. He prays like a Saint in the desert, exorcizing a demon*) Pride is dead! Blessed are the meek! Blessed are the poor in spirit! ⁵

MARGARET. (*without looking at him—in a comforting, motherly tone*) My poor boy!

DION. (*resentfully—clapping on his mask again and 30 springing to his feet—derisively*) Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit graves! Blessed are the poor in spirit for they are blind! (*Then with tortured bitterness*) All right! Then I ask my wife to go and ask Billy Brown—that's more deadly than if I went myself! (*With wild mockery*) Ask him if he can't find an opening for a talented young man who is only honest when he isn't sober—implore him, beg him in the name of old love, old friendship—to be a generous hero and save the woman and her children! 40 (*He laughs with a sort of diabolical, ironical glee now, and starts to go out*).

MARGARET. (*meekly*) Are you going up street, Dion?

DION. Yes.

MARGARET. Will you stop at the butchers' and have them send two pounds of pork chops?

DION. Yes.

⁵ Cf. Matthew v:4-5.

MARGARET. And stop at Mrs. Young's and ask the children to hurry right home?

DION. Yes.

MARGARET. Will you be back for dinner, Dion?

DION. No. (*He goes, the outer door slams. MARGARET sighs with a tired incomprehension and goes to the window and stares out*).

MARGARET. (*worriedly*) I hope they'll watch out, crossing the street.

CURTAIN

Scene Two

SCENE. BILLY BROWN'S Office, at five in the afternoon. At center, a fine mahogany desk with a swivel chair in back of it. To the left of desk, an office arm-chair. To the right of desk, an office lounge. The background is a backdrop of an office wall, treated similarly to that of Scene One in its over-meticulous representation of detail.

BILLY BROWN is seated at the desk looking over a blue print by the light of a desk lamp. He has grown into a fine-looking, well-dressed, capable, college-bred American business man, boyish still and with the same engaging personality.

The telephone rings.

BROWN. (*answering it*) Yes? Who? (*This in surprise—then with eager pleasure*) Let her come right in. (*He gets up and goes to the door, expectant and curious. MARGARET enters. Her face is concealed behind the mask of the pretty young matron, still hardly a woman, who cultivates a naïvely innocent and bravely hopeful attitude toward things and acknowledges no wound to the world. She is dressed as in Scene One but with an added touch of effective primping here and there*).

MARGARET. (*very gayly*) Hello, Billy Brown!

BROWN. (*awkward in her presence, shakes her 40 hand*) Come in. Sit down. This is a pleasant surprise, Margaret. (*She sits down on the lounge. He sits in his chair behind the desk, as before*).

MARGARET. (*looking around*) What lovely offices! My, but Billy Brown is getting grand!

BROWN. (*pleased*) I've just moved in. The old place was too stuffy.

MARGARET. It looks so prosperous—but then, Billy is doing so wonderfully well, everyone says.

BROWN. (*modestly*) Well, to be frank, it's been

mostly luck Things have come my way without my doing much about it (*Then, with an abashed pride*) Still—I have done a little something myself (*He picks the plan from the desk*) See this? It's my design for the new Municipal Building It's just been accepted—provisionally—by the Committee

MARGARET (*taking it—vaguely*) Oh? (*She looks at it abstractedly There is a pause Suddenly*) You mentioned the other day how well Dion used to draw—

BROWN (*a bit stiffly*) Yes, he certainly did (*He takes the drawing from her and at once becomes interested and squints at it frowningly*) Did you notice that anything seemed lacking in this?

MARGARET (*indifferently*) Not at all.

BROWN (*with a cheerful grin*) The Committee want it made a little more American It's too much of a conventional Gicco-Roman tomb, they say. (*Laughs*) They want an original touch of modern novelty stuck in to liven it up and make it look different from other town halls. (*Putting the drawing back on his desk*) And I've been figuring out how to give it to them but my mind doesn't seem to run that way Have you any suggestion?

MARGARET (*as if she hadn't heard*) Dion certainly draws well, Billy Brown was saying?

BROWN (*trying not to show his annoyance*) Why yes—he did—and still can, I expect (*A pause He masters what he feels to be an unworthy pique and turns to her generously*) Dion would have made a cracking good architect

MARGARET (*proudly*) I know He could be anything he wanted to

BROWN (*a pause—embarrassedly*) Is he working at anything these days?

MARGARET (*defensively*) Oh, yes! He's painting wonderfully! But he's just like a child, he's so impractical. He doesn't try to have an exhibition anywhere, or anything

BROWN (*surprised*) The one time I ran into him, I thought he told me he'd destroyed all his pictures—that he'd gotten sick of painting and completely given it up.

MARGARET (*quickly*) He always tells people that. He doesn't want anyone even to look at his things, imagine! He keeps saying they're rotten—when they're really too beautiful! He's too modest for his own good, don't you think? But it is true he hasn't done so much lately since we've been back You see

the children take up such a lot of his time. He just worships them! I'm afraid he's becoming a hopeless family man, just the opposite of what anyone would expect who knew him in the old days

BROWN (*painfully embarrassed by her loyalty and his knowledge of the facts*) Yes, I know (*He coughs self-consciously*)

MARGARET (*aroused by something in his manner*) But I suppose the gossips are telling the same silly stories about him they always did (*She forces a laugh*) Poor Dion! Give a dog a bad name! (*Her voice breaks a little in spite of herself*)

BROWN (*hastily*) I haven't heard any stories—he stops uncertainly, then decides to plunge in—except about money matters

MARGARET (*forcing a laugh*) Oh, perhaps they're true enough Dion is such a generous fool with his money, like all artists

BROWN (*with a certain doggedness*) There's a rumor that you've applied for a position at the Library

MARGARET (*forcing a gay tone*) Yes, indeed! Won't it be fun! Maybe it'll improve my mind! And one of us has got to be practical, so why not me? (*She forces a gay, gushy laugh*)

BROWN (*impulsively reaches out and takes her hand—awkwardly*) Listen, Margaret Let's be perfectly frank, will you? I'm such an old friend, and I want like the deuce to . . . You know darn well I'd do anything in the world to help you—or Dion.

MARGARET (*withdrawing her hand, coldly*) I'm afraid I—don't understand, Billy Brown.

BROWN (*acutely embarrassed*) Well, I—I just meant—you know, if you needed— (*A pause He looks questioningly at her averted face—then ventures on another tack, matter-of-factly*) I've got a proposition to make to Dion—if I could ever get hold of him. It's this way: business has been piling up on me—a run of luck—but I'm short-handed. I need a crack chief draftsman damn badly—or I'm liable to lose out. Do you think Dion would consider it—as a temporary stop-gap—until he felt in the painting mood again?

MARGARET (*striving to conceal her eagerness and relief—judicially*) Yes—I really do. He's such a good sport and Billy and he were such pals once I know he'd be only too tickled to help him out

BROWN (*diffidently*) I thought he might be sensitive about working for—I mean, with me—when,

if he hadn't sold out to Dad he'd be my partner now—(earnestly)—and, by jingo, I wish he was! (Then, abruptly) Let's try to nail him down right away, Margaret. Is he home now? (He reaches for the phone).

MARGARET. (hurriedly) No, he—he went out for a long walk.

BROWN. Perhaps I can locate him later around town somewhere.

MARGARET. (with a note of pleading) Please don't 10 trouble. It isn't necessary. I'm sure when I talk to him—he's coming home to dinner— (Getting up) Then it's all settled, isn't it? Dion will be so glad to be able to help an old friend—he's so terribly loyal, and he's always liked Billy Brown so much! (Holding out her hand) I really must go now!

BROWN. (shakes her hand) Good-by, Margaret. I hope you'll be dropping in on us a lot when Dion gets here.

MARGARET. Yes. (She goes).

BROWN. (sits at his desk again, looking ahead in a not unsatisfying melancholic reverie. He mutters admiringly but pityingly) Poor Margaret! She's a game sport, but it's pretty damn tough on her! (Indig-
nantly) By God, I'm going to give Dion a good talking-to one of these days!

CURTAIN

Scene Three

SCENE. CYBEL's parlor. An automatic, nickel-in-the-slot player-piano is at center, rear. On its right is a dirty gilt second-hand sofa. At the left is a bald-spotted crimson plush chair. The backdrop for the rear wall is cheap wall-paper of a dull yellow-brown, resembling a blurred impression of a fallow field in early spring. There is a cheap alarm clock on top of the piano. Beside it her mask is lying.

DION is sprawled on his back, fast asleep on the sofa. His mask has fallen down on his chest. His pale 40 face is singularly pure, spiritual and sad.

The player-piano is groggily banging out a sentimental medley of "Mother—Mammy" tunes.

CYBEL is seated on the stool in front of the piano. She is a strong, calm, sensual blonde girl of twenty or so, her complexion fresh and healthy, her figure full-breasted and wide-hipped, her movements slow and solidly languorous like an animal's, her large eyes dreamy with the reflected stirring of profound

instincts. She chews gum like a sacred cow forgetting time with an eternal end. Her eyes are fixed, incuriously, on DION's pale face.

CYBEL.⁶ (as the tune runs out, glances at the clock, which indicates midnight, then goes slowly over to DION and puts her hand gently on his forehead) Wake up!

DION. (stirs, sighs and murmurs dreamily) "And He laid his hands on them and healed them."⁷ (Then with a start he opens his eyes and, half sitting up, stares at her bewilderedly) What—where—who are you? (He reaches for his mask and claps it on defensively).

CYBEL. (placidly) Only another female. You was camping on my steps, sound asleep. I didn't want to run any risk getting into more trouble with the cops pinching you there and blaming me, so I took you in to sleep it off.

20 DION. (mockingly) Blessed are the pitiful, Sister!⁸ I'm broke—but you will be rewarded in Heaven!

CYBEL. (calmly) I wasn't wasting my pity. Why should I? You were happy, weren't you?

DION. (approvingly) Excellent! You're not a moralist, I see.

CYBEL. (going on) And you look like a good boy, too—when you're asleep. Say, you better beat it home to bed or you'll be locked out.

DION. (mockingly) Now you're becoming maternal, 30 Miss Earth. Is that the only answer—to pin my soul into every vacant diaper? (She stares down at his mask, her face growing hard. He laughs) But please don't stop stroking my aching brow. Your hand is a cool mud poultice on the sting of thought!

CYBEL. (calmly) Stop acting. I hate ham fats. (She looks at him as if waiting for him to remove his mask—then turns her back indifferently and goes to the piano) Well, if you simply got to be a regular devil like all the other visiting sports, I s'pose I got to play with you. (She takes her mask and puts it on—then turns. The mask is the rouged and eye-blackened countenance of the hardened prostitute. In a coarse, harsh voice) Kindly state your dishonorable intentions, if any! I can't sit up all night keeping com-

⁶ Barrett Clark says of Cybele, an incarnation of the Earth Mother, that she is "doomed to segregation as a pariah in a world of unnatural laws, but patronized by her segregators, who are thus themselves the first victim of their laws."

⁷ Cf. Mark viii:23.

⁸ Cf. Matthew v:4-11.

pany! Let's have some music! (*She puts a plug in the machine. The same sentimental medley begins to play. The two masks stare at each other. She laughs*) Shoot! I'm all set! It's your play, Kid Lucife!

DION (*slowly removes his mask. She stops the music with a jerk. His face is gentle and sad—humbly*) I'm sorry. It has always been such agony for me to be touched!

CYBEL (*taking off her mask—sympathetically as* 10 *she comes back and sits down on her stool*) Poor kid! I've never had one, but I can guess. They hug and kiss you and take you on their laps and pinch you and want to see you getting dressed and undressed—as if they owned you—I bet you I'd never let them treat one of mine that way!

DION (*turning to her*) You're lost in blind alleys, too. (*Suddenly holding out his hand to her*) But you're strong. Let's be friends.

CYBEL (*with a strange sternness, searches his face*) 20 And never nothing more?

DION (*with a strange smile*) Let's say, never anything less! (*She takes his hand. There is a ring at the outside door bell. They stare at each other. There is another ring*)

CYBEL. (*puts on her mask, DION does likewise. Mockingly*) When you got to love to live it's hard to love living. I better join the A. F. of L. and soap-box for the eight-hour night! Got a nickel, baby? Play a tune. (*She goes out. DION puts a nickel in* 30 *The same sentimental tune starts. CYBEL returns, followed by BILLY BROWN. His face is rigidly composed, but his superior disgust for DION can be seen. DION jerks off the music and he and BILLY look at each other for a moment, CYBEL watching them both—then, bored, she yawns*) He's hunting for you. Put out the lights when you go. I'm going to sleep. (*She starts to go—then, as if reminded of something—to DION*) Life's all right if you let it alone. (*Then mechanically flushing a trade smile at BILLY*) Now 40 you know the way, Handsome, call again! (*She goes*)

BROWN. (*after an awkward pause*) Hello, Dion! I've been looking all over town for you. This place was the very last chance. . . . (*Another pause—embarrassedly*) Let's take a walk.

DION (*mockingly*) I've given up exercise. They claim it lengthens your life.

BROWN (*persuasively*) Come on, Dion, be a good fellow. You're certainly not staying here—

DION Billy would like to think me taken in *flagrante delicto*,⁹ eh?

BROWN Don't be a damn fool! Listen to me! I've been looking you up for purely selfish reasons. I need your help.

DION (*astonished*) What?

BROWN I've a proposition to make that I hope you'll consider favorably out of old friendship. To be frank, Dion, I need you to lend me a hand down at the office.

DION (*with a harsh laugh*) So it's the job, is it? Then my poor wife did a-begging go!

BROWN (*repelled—sharply*) On the contrary, I had to beg her to beg you to take it. (*More angrily*) Look here, Dion! I won't listen to you talk that way about Margaret! And you wouldn't if you weren't drunk! (*Suddenly shaking him*) What in hell has come over you, anyway! You didn't use to be like this! What the devil are you going to do with yourself—sink into the gutter and drag Margaret with you? If you'd heard her defend you, lie about you, tell me how hard you were working, what beautiful things you were painting, how you stayed at home and idolized the children!—when everyone knows you've been out every night sousing and gambling away the last of your estate. . . . (*He stops, ashamed, controlling himself*).

DION (*wearily*) She was lying about her husband, not me, you fool! But it's no use explaining. (*Then, in a sudden, excitable passion*) What do you want? I agree to anything—except the humiliation of yelling secrets at the deaf!

BROWN. (*trying a bullying tone—roughly*) Bunk! Don't try to crawl out! There's no excuse and you know it. (*Then as DION doesn't reply—penitently*) But I know I shouldn't talk this way, old man! It's only because we're such old pals—and I hate to see you wasting yourself—you who had more brains than any of us! But, damn it, I suppose you're too much of a rotten cynic to believe I mean what I've just said!

DION. (*touched*) I know Billy was always Dion Anthony's friend.

BROWN You're damn right I am—and I'd have proved it long ago if you'd only given me half a chance! After all, I couldn't keep chasing after you and be snubbed every time. A man has some pride!

⁹ "In the very act."

DION. (*bitterly mocking*) Dead wrong! Never more! None whatever! It's unmoral! Blessed are the poor in spirit, Brother! When shall I report?

BROWN. (*eagerly*) Then you'll take the—you'll help me?

DION. (*wearily bitter*) I'll take the job. One must do something to pass away the time, while one is waiting—for one's next incarnation.

BROWN. (*jokingly*) I'd say it was a bit early to be worrying about that. (*Trying to get DION started*)¹⁰ Come along, now. It's pretty late.

DION. (*shakes his hand off his shoulder and walks away from him—after a pause*) Is my father's chair still there?

BROWN. (*turns away—embarrassed*) I—I don't really remember, Dion—I'll look it up.

DION. (*taking off his mask—slowly*) I'd like to sit where he spun what I have spent. What aliens we were to each other! When he lay dead, his face looked so familiar that I wondered where I had met²⁰ that man before. Only at the second of my conception. After that, we grew hostile with concealed shame. And my mother? I remember a sweet, strange girl, with affectionate, bewildered eyes as if God had locked her in a dark closet without any explanation. I was the sole doll our ogre, her husband, allowed her and she played mother and child with me for many years in that house until at last through two tears I watched her die with the shy pride of one who has lengthened her dress and put up her hair.³⁰ And I felt like a forsaken toy and cried to be buried with her, because her hands alone had caressed without clawing. She lived long and aged greatly in the two days before they closed her coffin. The last time I looked, her purity had forgotten me, she was stainless and imperishable, and I knew my sobs were ugly and meaningless to her virginity; so I shrank away, back into life, with naked nerves jumping like fleas, and in due course of nature another girl called me her boy in the moon and married me and became⁴⁰ three mothers in one person, while I got paint on my paws in an endeavor to see God! (*He laughs wildly—claps on his mask*) But that Ancient Humorist had given me weak eyes, so now I'll have to fore-swear my quest for Him and go in for the Omnipresent Successful Serious One, the Great God Mr. Brown, instead! (*He makes him a sweeping, mocking bow*).

BROWN. (*repelled but cajolingly*) Shut up, you

nut! You're still drunk. Come on! Let's start! (*He grabs DION by the arm and switches off the light*).

DION. (*from the darkness—mockingly*) I am thy shorn, bald, nude sheep! Lead on, Almighty Brown, thou Kindly Light!

CURTAIN

Act Two

Scene One

SCENE. CYBEL's parlor—about sunset in spring seven years later. The arrangement of furniture is the same but the chair and sofa are new, bright-colored, costly pieces. The old automatic piano at center looks exactly the same. The cheap alarm clock is still on top of it. On either side of the clock, the masks of DION and CYBEL are lying. The background backdrop is brilliant, stunning wall-paper, on which crimson and purple flowers and fruits tumble over²⁰ one another in a riotously profane lack of any apparent design.

DION sits in the chair on left, CYBEL on the sofa. A cardtable is between them. Both are playing solitaire. DION is now prematurely gray. His face is that of an ascetic, a martyr, furrowed by pain and self-torture, yet lighted from within by a spiritual calm and human kindliness.

CYBEL has grown stouter and more voluptuous, but her face is still unmarked and fresh, her calm³⁰ more profound. She is like an unmoved idol of Mother Earth.

The piano is whining out its same old sentimental medley. They play their cards intently and contentedly. The music stops.

CYBEL. (*musingly*) I love those rotten old sob tunes. They make me wise to people. That's what's inside them—what makes them love and murder their neighbor—crying jags set to music!

DION. (*compassionately*) Every song is a hymn. They keep trying to find the Word in the Beginning.¹⁰

CYBEL. They try to know too much. It makes them weak. I never puzzled them with myself. I gave them a Tart. They understood her and knew their parts and acted naturally. And on both sides we were able to keep our real virtue, if you get me. (*She plays her last card—indifferently*) I've made it again.

¹⁰ Cf. John i:1.

DION (*smiling*) Your luck is uncanny. It never comes out for me.

CYBEL You keep getting closer, but it knows you still want to win—a little bit—and it's wise all I care about is playing. (*She lays out another game*) Speaking of my canned music, our Mr. Brown hates that old box. (*At the mention of BROWN, DION trembles as if suddenly possessed, has a terrible struggle with himself, then while she continues to speak, gets up like an automaton and puts on his mask. The mask is now terribly ravaged. All of its Pan quality has changed into a diabolical Mephistophelean cruelty and irony*) He doesn't mind the music inside. That gets him somehow. But he thinks the case looks shabby and he wants it junked. But I told him that just because he's been keeping me so long, he needn't start bossing like a husband or I'll— (*She looks up and sees the masked DION standing by the piano—calmly*) Hello! Getting jealous again?

DION (*jeeringly*) Are you falling in love with your keeper, old Sacred Cow?

CYBEL. (*without taking offense*) Cut it! You've been asking me that for years. Be yourself! He's healthy and handsome—but he's too guilty. What makes you pretend you think love is so important, anyway? It's just one of a lot of things you do to keep life living.

DION (*in the same tone*) Then you've lied when you've said you loved me, have you, Old Filth?

CYBEL. (*affectionately*) You'll never grow up! We've been friends, haven't we, for seven years? I've never let myself want you nor you me. Yes, I love you. It takes all kinds of love to make a world! Ours is the living cream, I say, living rich and high! (*A pause. Coaxingly*) Stop hiding. I know you.

DION (*taking off his mask, wearily comes and sits down at her feet and lays his head in her lap—with a grateful smile*) You're strong. You always give. You've given my weakness strength to live.

CYBEL. (*tenderly, stroking his hair maternally*) You're not weak. You were born with ghosts in your eyes and you were brave enough to go looking into your own dark—and you got afraid. (*After a pause*) I don't blame your being jealous of Mr. Brown sometimes. I'm jealous of your wife, even though I know you do love her.

DION (*slowly*) I love Margaret. I don't know who my wife is.

CYBEL (*after a pause—with a queer broken laugh*)

Oh, God, sometimes the truth hits me such a sock between the eyes I can see the stars!—and then I'm so damn sorry for the lot of you, every damn mother's son-of-a-gun of you, that I'd like to run out naked into the street and love the whole mob to death like I was bringing you all a new brand of dope that'd make you forget everything that ever was for good! (*Then, with a twisted smile*) But they wouldn't see me, any more than they see each other. And they keep right on moving along and dying without my help anyway.

DION (*sadly*) You've given me strength to die.

CYBEL You may be important but your life's not. There's millions of it born every second. Life can cost too much even for a sucker to afford it—like everything else. And it's not sacred—only the you inside is. The rest is earth.

DION. (*gets to his knees and with clasped hands looks up rapidly and prays with an ascetic fervor*) "Into thy hands, O Lord,"¹¹ . . . (*Then suddenly, with a look of horror*) Nothing! To feel one's life blown out like the flame of a cheap match . . . (*He claps on his mask and laughs harshly*) To fall asleep and know you'll never, never be called to get on the job of existence again! "Swift be thine approaching flight! Come soon—soon!"¹² (*He quotes this last with a mocking longing*).

CYBEL (*pats his head maternally*) There, don't be scared. It's born in the blood. When the time comes, you'll find it's easy.

DION (*jumps to his feet and walks about excitedly*) It won't be long. My wife dragged in a doctor the day before yesterday. He says my heart is gone—booze—He warned me, never another drop or— (*Mockingly*) What say? Shall we have a drink?

CYBEL (*like an idol*) Suit yourself. It's in the pantry. (*Then, as he hesitates*) What set you off on this bat? You were raving on about some cathedral plans. . . .

DION (*wildly mocking*) They've been accepted—Mr. Brown's designs! My designs really! You don't need to be told that. He hands me one mathematically correct barn after another and I doctor them up with cute allurements so that fools will desire to buy, sell, breed, sleep, love, hate, curse and pray in them! I do this with devilish cleverness to their entire delight! Once I dreamed of painting wind on

¹¹ Luke xxiii 46

¹² Shelley, "To Night"

the sea and the skimming flight of cloud shadows over the tops of trees! Now . . . *(He laughs)* But pride is a sin—even in a memory of the long deceased! Blessed are the poor in spirit! ¹³ *He subsides weakly on his chair, his hand pressed to his heart.*

CYBEL. *(like an idol)* Go home and sleep. Your wife'll be worried.

DION. She knows—but she'll never admit to herself that her husband ever entered your door. *(Mocking)* Aren't women loyal—to their vanity and their ¹⁰ other things!

CYBEL. Brown is coming soon, don't forget.

DION. He knows too and can't admit. Perhaps he needs me here—unknown. What first aroused his passion to possess you exclusively, do you think? Because he knew you loved me and he felt himself cheated. He wanted what he thought was my love of the flesh! He feels I have no right to love. He'd like to steal it as he steals my ideas—complacently—righteously. Oh, the good Brown!

CYBEL. But you like him, too! You're brothers, I guess, somehow. Well, remember he's paying, he'll pay—in some way or other.

DION. *(raises his head as if starting to remove the mask)* I know. Poor Billy! God forgive me the evil I've done him!

CYBEL. *(reaches out and takes his hand)* Poor boy!

DION. *(presses her convulsively—then with forced harshness)* Well, homeward Christian Soldier! I'm off! By-bye, Mother Earth! *(He starts to go off right. 30 She seems about to let him go.)*

CYBEL. *(suddenly starts and calls with deep grief)* Dion! *(He looks at her. A pause. He comes slowly back. She speaks strangely in a deep, far-off voice—and yet like a mother talking to her little son)* You mustn't forget to kiss me before you go, Dion. *(She removes his mask)* Haven't I told you to take off your mask in the house? Look at me, Dion. I've—just—seen—something. I'm afraid you're going away a long, long ways. I'm afraid I won't see you again ⁴⁰ for a long, long time. So it's good-by, dear. *(She kisses him gently. He begins to sob. She hands him back his mask)* Here you are. Don't get hurt. Remember, it's all a game, and after you're asleep I'll tuck you in.

DION. *(in a choking, heart-broken cry)* Mother! *(Then he claps on his mask with a terrible effort of will—mockingly)* Go to the devil, you sentimental

old pig! See you tomorrow! *(He goes, whistling, slamming the door).*

CYBEL. *(like an idol again)* What's the good of bearing children! What's the use of giving birth to death? *(She sighs wearily, turns, puts a plug in the piano, which starts up its old sentimental tune. At the same moment BROWN enters quietly from the left. He is the ideal of the still youthful, good-looking, well-groomed, successful provincial American of 40 forty. Just now, he is plainly perturbed. He is not able to see either CYBEL's face or her mask).*

BROWN. Cybel! *(She starts, jams off the music and reaches for her mask but has no time to put it on)* Wasn't that Dion I just saw going out—after all your promises never to see him! *(She turns like an idol, holding the mask behind her. He stares, bewildered—stammers)* I—I beg your pardon—I thought—

CYBEL. *(in her strange voice)* Cybel's gone out to dig in the earth and pray.

²⁰ BROWN. *(with more assurance)* But—aren't those her clothes?

CYBEL. Cybel doesn't want people to see me naked. I'm her sister. Dion came to see me.

BROWN. *(relieved)* So that's what he's up to, is it? *(Then with a pitying sigh)* Poor Margaret! *(Then with playful reproof)* You really shouldn't encourage him. He's married and got three big sons.

CYBEL. And you haven't.

BROWN. *(stung)* No, I'm not married.

CYBEL. He and I were friends.

BROWN. *(with a playful wink)* Yes, I can imagine how the platonic must appeal to Dion's pure, innocent type! It's no good your kidding me about Dion. We've been friends since we were kids. I know him in and out. I've always stood up for him whatever he's done—so you can be perfectly frank. I only spoke as I did on account of Margaret—his wife—it's pretty tough on her.

CYBEL. You love his wife.

BROWN. *(scandalized)* What? What are you talking about? *(Then uncertainly)* Don't be a fool! *(A pause—then as if impelled by an intense curiosity)* So Dion is your lover, eh? That's very interesting. *(He pulls his chair closer to hers)* Sit down. Let's talk. *(She continues to stand, the mask held behind her)* Tell me—I've always been curious—what is it that makes Dion so attractive to women—especially certain types of women, if you'll pardon me? He always has been and yet I never could see exactly what

¹³ Cf. Matthew xv:3.

they saw in him Is it his looks—or because he's such a violent sensualist—or because he poses as artistic and temperamental—or because he's so wild—or just what is it?

CYBEL He's alive!

BROWN (*suddenly takes one of her hands and kisses it—insinuatingly*) Well, don't you think I'm alive, too? (*Eagerly*) Listen Would you consider giving up Dion—and letting me take care of you under a similar arrangement to the one I've made with Cybel? I like you, you can see that I won't bother you much—I'm much too busy—you can do what you like—lead your own life—except for seeing him (*He stops A pause She stares ahead unmoved as if she hadn't heard He pleads*) Well—what do you say? Please do!

CYBEL (*her voice very weary*) Cybel said to tell you she'd be back next week. Mr Brown

BROWN (*with queer agony*) You mean you won't? Don't be so cruel! I love you! (*She walks away He clutches at her pleadingly*) At least—I'll give you anything you ask!—please promise me you won't see Dion Anthony again!

CYBEL (*with deep grief*) He will never see me again, I promise you Good-by!

BROWN (*jubilantly, kissing her hand—politely*) Thank you! Thank you! I'm exceedingly grateful (*Tactfully*) I won't disturb you any further Please forgive my intrusion, and remember me to Cybel when you write (*He bows, turns, and goes off left*)

CURTAIN

Scene Two

SCENE *The drafting room in BROWN's office. DION's drafting table with a high stool in front is at center. Another stool is to the left of it At the right is a bench. It is in the evening of the same day. The black wall drop has windows painted on it with a dim, street lighted view of black houses across the way*

DION *is sitting on the stool in back of the table, reading aloud from the "Imitation of Christ" by Thomas à Kempis to his mask, which is on the table before him His own face is gentler, more spiritual, more saintlike and ascetic than ever before*

DION. (*like a priest, offering up prayers for the dying*) "Quickly must thou be gone from hence, see

then how matters stand with thee Ah, fool—learn now to die to the world that thou mayst begin to live with Christ! Do now, beloved, do now all thou canst because thou knowst not when thou shalt die, nor dost thou know what shall befall thee after death Keep thyself as a pilgrim, and a stranger upon earth, to whom the affairs of this world do not—belong! Keep thy heart free and raised upwards to God because thou hast not here a lasting abode,¹⁴ 'Because at what hour you know not the Son of Man will come!'"¹⁵ Amen (*He raises his hand over the mask as if he were blessing it, closes the book and puts it back in his pocket He raises the mask in his hands and stares at it with a pitying tenderness*) Peace, poor tortured one, brave pitiful pride of man, the hour of our deliverance comes Tomorrow we may be with Him in Paradise!¹⁶ (*He kisses it on the lips and sets it down again There is the noise of footsteps climbing the stairs in the hallway. He grabs up the mask in a sudden panic and, as a knock comes on the door, he claps it on and calls mockingly*) Come in, Miss Anthony, come in! (*MARGARET enters In one hand behind her, hidden from him, is the mask of the brave face she puts on before the world to hide her suffering and disillusionment, and which she has just taken off Her own face is still sweet and pretty but lined, drawn and careworn for its years, sad, resigned, but a bit querulous*)

MARGARET. (*wearily reproving*) Thank goodness I've found you! Why haven't you been home the last two days? It's bad enough your drinking again without your staying away and worrying us to death!

DION. (*bitterly*) My ears knew her footsteps One gets to recognize everything—and to see nothing!

MARGARET. I finally sent the boys out looking for you and came myself. (*With tired solicitude*) I suppose you haven't eaten a thing, as usual Won't you come home and let me fry you a chop?

DION. (*wonderingly*) Can Margaret still love Dion Anthony? Is it possible she does?

MARGARET (*forcing a tired smile*) I suppose so, Dion I certainly oughtn't to, had I?

DION. (*in same tone*) And I love Margaret! What haunted, haunting ghosts we are! We dimly remember so much it will take us so many million years to

¹⁴ From Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*.

¹⁵ Mark xiii.33.

¹⁶ Paraphrase of Luke xxiii 43

forget! (*He comes forward, putting one arm around her bowed shoulders, and they kiss*).

MARGARET. (*patting his hand affectionately*) No, you certainly don't deserve it. When I stop to think of all you've made me go through in the years since we settled down here . . . ! I really don't believe I could ever have stood it if it weren't for the boys! (*Forcing a smile*) But perhaps I would, I've always been such a big fool about you.

DION. (*a bit mockingly*) The boys! Three strong 10 sons! Margaret can afford to be magnanimous!

MARGARET. If they didn't find you, they were coming to meet me here.

DION. (*with sudden wildness—torturedly, sinking on his knees beside her*) Margaret! Margaret! I'm lonely! I'm frightened! I'm going away! I've got to say good-by!

MARGARET. (*patting his hair*) Poor boy! Poor Dion! Come home and sleep.

DION. (*springs up frantically*) No! I'm a man! I'm 20 a lonely man! I can't go back! I have conceived myself! (*Then with desperate mockery*) Look at me, Mrs. Anthony! It's the last chance! Tomorrow I'll have moved on to the next hell! Behold your man—the sniveling, cringing, life-denying Christian slave you have so nobly ignored in the father of your sons! Look! (*He tears the mask from his face, which is radiant with a great pure love for her and a great sympathy and tenderness*) O woman—my love—that I have sinned against in my sick pride and 30 cruelty—forgive my sins—forgive my solitude—forgive my sickness—forgive me! (*He kneels and kisses the hem of her dress*).

MARGARET. (*who has been staring at him with terror, raising her mask to ward off his face*) Dion! Don't! I can't bear it! You're like a ghost! You're dead! Oh, my God! Help! Help! (*She falls back fainting on the bench. He looks at her—then takes her hand which holds her mask and looks at that face—gently*) And now I am permitted to understand 40 and love you, too! (*He kisses the mask first—then kisses her face, murmuring*) And you, sweetheart! Blessed, thrice blessed are the meek! (*There is a sound of heavy, hurrying footsteps on the stairs. He puts on his mask in haste. The THREE SONS rush into the room. The Eldest is about fourteen, the two others thirteen and twelve. They look healthy, normal, likeable boys, with much the same quality as BILLY BROWN's in Act One, Scene One. They stop*

short and stiffen all in a row, staring from the woman on the bench to their father, accusingly).

ELDEST. We heard someone yell. It sounded like Mother.

DION. (*defensively*) No. It was this lady—my wife.

ELDEST. But hasn't Mother come yet?

DION. (*going to MARGARET*) Yes. Your Mother is here. (*He stands between them and puts her mask over MARGARET's face—then steps back*) She has fainted. You'd better bring her to.

BOYS. Mother! (*They run to her side, kneel and rub her wrists. The ELDEST smooths back her hair*).

DION. (*watching them*) At least I am leaving her well provided for. (*He addresses them directly*) Tell your mother she'll get word from Mr. Brown's house. I must pay him a farewell call. I am going. Good-by. (*They stop, staring at him fixedly, with eyes a mixture of bewilderment, distrust and hurt*).

ELDEST. (*awkwardly and shamefacedly*) Honest, I think you ought to have . . .

SECOND. Yes, honest you ought . . .

YOUNGEST. Yes, honest . . .

DION. (*in a friendly tone*) I know. But I couldn't. That's for you who can. You must inherit the earth for her. Don't forget now, boys. Good-by.

BOYS. (*in the same awkward, self-conscious tone, one after another*) Good-by—good-by—good-by. (*DION goes*).

CURTAIN

Scene Three

SCENE. The library of WILLIAM BROWN's home—night of the same day. A backdrop of carefully painted, prosperous, bourgeois culture, bookcases filled with sets, etc. The heavy table at center is expensive. The leather armchair at left of it and the couch at right are opulently comfortable. The reading lamp on the table is the only light.

BROWN sits in the chair at left reading an architectural periodical. His expression is composed and gravely receptive. In outline, his face suggests a Roman consul on an old coin. There is an incongruous distinction about it, the quality of unquestioning faith in the finality of its achievement.

There is a sudden loud thumping on the front door and the ringing of the bell. BROWN frowns and listens as a servant answers. DION's voice can be heard, raised mockingly.

DION Tell him it's the devil come to conclude a bargain

BROWN (*suppressing annoyance, calls out with forced good nature*) Come on in, Dion (*Dion enters. He is in a wild state. His clothes are disheveled, his masked face has a terrible deathlike intensity, its mocking irony becomes so cruelly malignant as to give him the appearance of a real demon, tortured into torturing others*) Sit down

DION (*stands and sings*) William Brown's soul lies 10
mouldering in the crib but his body goes marching on! 17

BROWN (*maintaining the same indulgent, big-brotherly tone, which he tries to hold throughout the scene*) Not so loud, for Pete's sake! I don't mind—but I've got neighbors

DION Hate them! Fear thy neighbor as thyself! That's the leaden rule for the safe and sanc. (*Then advancing to the table with a sort of deadly calm*) Listen! One day when I was four years old, a boy 20
sneaked up behind when I was drawing a picture in the sand he couldn't draw and hit me on the head with a stick and kicked out my picture and laughed when I cried. It wasn't what he'd done that made me cry, but him! I had loved and trusted him and suddenly the good God was disproved in his person and the evil and injustice of Man was born! Everyone called me cry-baby, so I became silent for life and designed a mask of the Bad Boy Pan in which to live and rebel against that other boy's God and protect 30
myself from His cruelty. And that other boy, secretly he felt ashamed but he couldn't acknowledge it, so from that day he instinctively developed into the good boy, the good friend, the good man, William Brown!

BROWN. (*shamefacedly*) I remember now. It was a dirty trick. (*Then with a trace of resentment*) Sit down. You know where the booze is. Have a drink, if you like. But I guess you've had enough already.

DION. (*looks at him fixedly for a moment—then 40
strangely*) Thanks be to Brown for reminding me. I must drink (*He goes and gets a bottle of whisky and a glass*).

BROWN (*with a good-humored shrug*) All right. It's your funeral.

DION. (*returning and pouring out a big drink in*

the tumbler) And William Brown's! When I die, he goes to hell! Shoal! (*He drinks and stares malevolently in spite of himself, Brown is uneasy. A pause*).

BROWN (*with forced casualness*) You've been on this toot for a week now

DION (*tauntingly*) I've been celebrating the acceptance of my design for the cathedral

BROWN (*humorously*) You certainly helped me a lot on it

DION (*with a harsh laugh*) O perfect Brown! Never mind! I'll make him look in my mirror yet—and drown in it! (*He pours out another big drink*)

BROWN (*rather tauntingly*) Go easy I don't want your corpse on my hands

DION But I do (*He drinks*) Brown will still need me—to reassure him he's alive! I've loved, lusted, won and lost, sang and wept! I've been life's lover! I've fulfilled her will and if she's through with me now it's only because I was too weak to dominate her in turn. It isn't enough to be her creature, you've got to create her or she requests you to destroy yourself.

BROWN (*good-naturedly*) Nonsense Go home and get some sleep.

DION. (*as if he hadn't heard—bitingly*) But to be neither creature nor creator! To exist only in her indifference! To be unloved by life! (*Brown stirs uneasily*) To be merely a successful freak, the result of some smug neutralizing of life forces—a spineless cactus—a wild boar of the mountains altered into a packer's hog eating to become food—a Don Juan inspired to romance by a monkey's glands—and to have Life not even think you funny enough to see!

BROWN. (*stung—angrily*) Bosh!

DION. Consider Mr. Brown. His parents bore him on earth as if they were thereby entering him in a baby parade with prizes for the fattest—and he's still being wheeled along in the procession, too fat now to learn to walk, let alone to dance or run, and he'll never live until his liberated dust quickens into earth!

BROWN. (*gruffly*) Rave on! (*Then with forced good-nature*) Well, Dion, at any rate, I'm satisfied.

DION. (*quickly and malevolently*) No! Brown isn't satisfied! He's piled on layers of protective fat, but vaguely, deeply he feels at his heart the gnawing of a doubt! And I'm interested in that germ which

¹⁷ "John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave," a popular Civil War song attributed to Thomas Brigham Bishop (1835-1905)

wiggles like a question mark of insecurity in his blood, because it's part of the creative life Brown's stolen from me!

BROWN. (*forcing a sour grin*) Steal germs? I thought you caught them.

DION. (*as if he hadn't heard*) It's mine—and I'm interested in seeing it thrive and breed and become multitudes and eat until Brown is consumed!

BROWN. (*cannot restrain a shudder*) Sometimes when you're drunk, you're positively evil, do you know it?

DION. (*somberly*) When Pan was forbidden the light and warmth of the sun he grew sensitive and self-conscious and proud and revengeful—and became Prince of Darkness.

BROWN. (*jocularly*) You don't fit the rôle of Pan, Dion. It sounds to me like Bacchus, alias the Demon Rum, doing the talking. (*DION recovers from his spasm with a start and stares at BROWN with terrible hatred. There is a pause. In spite of himself, BROWN squirms and adopts a placating tone*) Go home. Be a good scout. It's all well enough celebrating our design being accepted but—

DION. (*in a steely voice*) I've been the brains! I've been the design! I've designed even his success—drunk and laughing at him—laughing at his career! Not proud! Sick! Sick of myself and him! Designing and getting drunk! Saving my woman and children! (*He laughs*) Ha! And this cathedral is my masterpiece! It will make Brown the most eminent architect in this state of God's Country. I put a lot into it—what was left of my life! It's one vivid blasphemy from sidewalk to the tips of its spires!—but so concealed that the fools will never know. They'll kneel and worship the ironic Silenus¹⁸ who tells them the best good is never to be born! (*He laughs triumphantly*) Well, blasphemy is faith, isn't it? In self-preservation the devil must believe! But Mr. Brown, the Great Brown, has no faith! He couldn't design a cathedral without it looking like the First Super-natural Bank! He only believes in the immortality of the moral belly! (*He laughs wildly—then sinks down in his chair, gasping, his hands pressed to his heart. Then suddenly becomes deadly calm and pronounces like a cruel malignant condemnation*) From now on, Brown will never design anything. He will devote his

life to renovating the house of my Cybel into a home for my Margaret!

BROWN. (*springing to his feet, his face convulsed with strange agony*) I've stood enough! How dare you . . . !

DION. (*his voice like a probe*) Why has no woman ever loved him? Why has he always been the Big Brother, the Friend? Isn't their trust—a contempt?

BROWN. You lie!

DION. Why has he never been able to love—since my Margaret? Why has he never married? Why has he tried to steal Cybel, as he once tried to steal Margaret? Isn't it out of revenge—and envy?

BROWN. (*violently*) Rot! I wanted Cybel, and I bought her!

DION. Brown bought her for me! She has loved me more than he will ever know!

BROWN. You lie! (*Then furiously*) I'll throw her back on the street!

DION. To me! To her fellow creature! Why hasn't Brown had children—he who loves children—he who loves my children—he who envies me my children?

BROWN. (*brokenly*) I'm not shamed to envy you them!

DION. They like Brown, too—as a friend—as an equal—as Margaret has always liked him—

BROWN. (*brokenly*) And as I've liked her!

DION. How many million times Brown has thought how much better for her it would have been if she'd chosen him instead!

BROWN. (*torturedly*) You lie! (*Then with sudden frenzied defiance*) All right. If you force me to say it, I do love Margaret! I always have loved her and you've always known I did!

DION. (*with a terrible composure*) No! That is merely the appearance, not the truth! Brown loves me! He loves me because I have always possessed the power he needed for love, because I am love!

BROWN. (*frenziedly*) You drunken bum! (*He leaps on DION and grabs him by the throat*).

DION. (*triumphantly, staring into his eyes*) Ah! Now he looks into the mirror! Now he sees his face! (*BROWN lets go of him and staggers back to his chair, pale and trembling*).

BROWN. (*humbly*) Stop, for God's sake! You're mad!

DION. (*sinking in his chair, more and more weakly*) I'm done. My heart, not Brown—(*Mockingly*) My last will and testament! I leave Dion Anthony to

¹⁸ In Greek mythology often considered the foster-father of Bacchus, but also frequently one of minor deities, addicted to wine and reveling.

William Brown—for him to love and obey—for him to become me—then my Margaret will love me—my children will love me—Mr and Mrs Brown and sons, happily ever after! (*Staggering to his full height and looking upward defiantly*) Nothing more—but Man's last gesture—by which he conquers—to laugh! Ha— (*He begins, stops as if paralyzed, and drops on his knees by BROWN's chair, his mask falling off, his Christian Martyr's face at the point of death*) Forgive me, Billy. Bury me, hide me, forget me for your own happiness! May Margaret love you! May you design the Temple of Man's Soul! Blessed are the meek and the poor in spirit!¹⁹ (*He kisses BROWN's feet—then more and more weakly and childishly*) What was the prayer, Billy? I'm getting so sleepy

BROWN (*in a trancelike tone*) "Our Father who art in Heaven"²⁰

DION (*drowsily*). "Our Father" . . . (*He dies. A pause. BROWN remains in a stupor for a moment—then stirs himself, puts his hand on DION's breast*)

BROWN (*dully*) He's dead—at last (*He says this mechanically but the last two words awaken him—wonderingly*) At last? (*Then with triumph*) At last! (*He stares at DION's real face contemptuously*) So that's the poor weakling you really were! No wonder you hid! And I've always been afraid of you—yes, I'll confess it now, in awe of you! Paugh! (*He picks up the mask from the floor*) No, not of you! Of this! Say what you like, it's strong if it is bad! And this is what Margaret loved, not you! Not you! This man!—30 this man who willed himself to me! (*Struck by an idea, he jumps to his feet*) By God! (*He slowly starts to put the mask on. A knocking comes on the street door. He starts guiltily, laying the mask on the table. Then he picks it up again quickly, takes the dead body and carries it off left. He reappears immediately and goes to the front door as the knocking recommences—gruffly*) Hello! Who's there?

MARGARET It's Margaret, Billy. I'm looking for Dion.

BROWN. (*uncertainly*) Oh—all right— (*Unfastening door*) Come in. Hello, Margaret. Hello, Boys! He's here. He's asleep. I—I was just dozing off too. (*MARGARET enters. She is wearing her mask. The THREE SONS are with her.*)

MARGARET (*seeing the bottle, forcing a laugh*) Has he been celebrating?

BROWN (*with strange glibness now*) No I was. He wasn't. He said he'd sworn off tonight—forever—for your sake—and the kids!

MARGARET (*with amazed joy*) Dion said that? (*Then hastily defensive*) But of course he never does drink much. Where is he?

BROWN Upstairs. I'll wake him. He felt bad. He took off his clothes to take a bath before he lay down. You just wait here. (*She sits in the chair where DION had sat and stares straight before her. The sons group around her, as if for a family photo. BROWN hurries out left.*)

MARGARET It's late to keep you boys up. Aren't you sleepy?

BOYS No, Mother.

MARGARET (*proudly*) I'm glad to have three such strong boys to protect me.

ELDEST. (*boastingly*) We'd kill anyone that touched you, wouldn't we?

NEXT You bet! We'd make him wish he hadn't!

YOUNGEST. You bet!

MARGARET. You're Mother's brave boys! (*She laughs fondly—then curiously*) Do you like Mr. Brown?

ELDEST. Sure thing! He's a regular fellow.

NEXT He's all right!

YOUNGEST. Sure thing!

MARGARET (*half to herself*) Your father claims he steals his ideas.

ELDEST. (*with a sheepish grin*) I'll bet father said that when he was—just talking.

NEXT. Mr. Brown doesn't have to steal, does he?

YOUNGEST. I should say not! He's awful rich.

MARGARET. Do you love your father?

ELDEST. (*scuffling—embarrassed*) Why—of course.

NEXT (*ditto*) Sure thing!

YOUNGEST. Sure I do.

MARGARET. (*with a sigh*) I think you'd better start on before—right now—before your father comes—40 He'll be very sick and nervous and he'll want to be quiet. So run along!

BOYS. All right. (*They file out and close the front door as BROWN, dressed in DION's clothes and wearing his mask, appears at left.*)

MARGARET (*taking off her mask, gladly*) Dion! (*She stares wonderingly at him and he at her, goes to him and puts an arm around him.*) Poor dear, do you feel sick? (*He nods*) But you look— (*squeezing his arms*)—why, you actually feel stronger and better

¹⁹ Cf. Matthew v 4

²⁰ Matthew vi. 9.

already! Is it true what Billy told me—about your swearing off forever! (*He nods. She exclaims intensely*) Oh, if you'll only—and get well—we can still be so happy! Give Mother a kiss. (*They kiss. A shudder passes through both of them. She breaks away laughing with aroused desire*) Why, Dion? Aren't you ashamed? You haven't kissed me like that in ages!

BROWN. (*his voice imitating DION's and muffled by the mask*) I've wanted to, Margaret!

MARGARET. (*gayly and coquettishly now*) Were you afraid I'd spurn you? Why, Dion, something has happened. It's like a miracle! Even your voice is changed! It actually sounds younger, do you know it? (*Then, solicitously*) But you must be worn out. Let's go home. (*With an impulsive movement she flings her arms wide open, throwing her mask away from her as if suddenly no longer needing it*) Oh, I'm beginning to feel so happy, Dion—so happy!

BROWN. (*stifledly*) Let's go home. (*She puts her 20 arm around him. They walk to the door*).

CURTAIN

Act Three

Scene One

SCENE. *The drafting room and private office of BROWN are both shown. The former is at left, the latter at right of a dividing wall at center. The arrangement of furniture in each room is the same 30 as in previous scenes. It is ten in the morning of a day about a month later. The backdrop for both rooms is of plain wall with a few tacked-up designs and blue prints painted on it.*

TWO DRAFTSMEN, *a middle-aged and a young man, both stoop-shouldered, are sitting on stools behind what was formerly DION's table. They are tracing plans. They talk as they work.*

OLDER DRAFTSMAN. W. B. is late again.

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN. Wonder what's got into him the last month? (*A pause. They work silently*).

OLDER DRAFTSMAN. Yes, ever since he fired Dion. . . .

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN. Funny his firing him all of a sudden like that. (*A pause. They work*).

OLDER DRAFTSMAN. I haven't seen Dion around town since then. Have you?

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN. No, not since Brown told

us he'd canned him. I suppose he's off drowning his sorrow!

OLDER DRAFTSMAN. I heard someone had seen him at home and he was sober and looking fine. (*A pause. They work*).

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN. What got into Brown? They say he fired all his old servants that same day and only uses his house to sleep in.

OLDER DRAFTSMAN. (*with a sneer*) Artistic temperament, maybe—the real name of which is swelled head! (*There is a noise of footsteps from the hall. Warningly*) Ssst! (*They bend over their table. MARGARET enters. She does not need to wear a mask now. Her face has regained the self-confident spirit of its youth, her eyes shine with happiness*).

MARGARET. (*heartily*) Good morning! What a lovely day!

BOTH. (*perfunctorily*) Good morning, Mrs. Anthony.

MARGARET. (*looking around*) You've been changing around in here, haven't you? Where is Dion? (*They stare at her*) I forgot to tell him something important this morning and our phone's out of order. So if you'll tell him I'm here—(*They don't move. A pause. MARGARET says stiffly*) Oh, I realize Mr. Brown has given strict orders Dion is not to be disturbed, but surely. . . . (*Sharply*) Where is my husband, please?

OLDER DRAFTSMAN. We don't know.

MARGARET. You don't know?

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN. We haven't seen him.

MARGARET. Why, he left home at eight-thirty!

OLDER DRAFTSMAN. To come here?

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN. This morning?

MARGARET. (*provoked*) Why, of course, to come here—as he does every day! (*They stare at her. A pause*).

OLDER DRAFTSMAN. (*evasively*) We haven't seen him.

40 MARGARET. (*with asperity*) Where is Mr. Brown?

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN. (*at a noise of footsteps from the hall—sulkily*) Coming now. (*BROWN enters. He is now wearing a mask which is an exact likeness of his face as it was in the last scene—the self-assured success. When he sees MARGARET, he starts back apprehensively*).

BROWN. (*immediately controlling himself—breezily*) Hello, Margaret! This is a pleasant surprise! (*He holds out his hand*).

MARGARET (*hardly taking it—reservedly*) Good morning

BROWN (*turning quickly to the DRAFTSMEN*) I hope you explained to Mrs. Anthony how busy Dion .

MARGARET (*interrupting him—stiffly*) I certainly can't understand—

BROWN (*hastily*) I'll explain. Come in here and be comfortable (*He throws open the door and ushers her into his private office*).

OLDER DRAFTSMAN Dion must be putting over some bluff on her

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN Pretending he's still here—and Brown's helping him .

OLDER DRAFTSMAN But why should Brown, after he . . . ?

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN Well, I suppose— Search me. (*They work*)

BROWN Have a chair, Margaret (*She sits on the chair stiffly. He sits behind the desk*)

MARGARET. (*coldly*) I'd like some explanation .

BROWN (*coaxingly*) Now, don't get angry, Margaret! Dion is hard at work on his design for the new State Capitol, and I don't want him disturbed, not even by you! So be a good sport! It's for his own good, remember! I asked him to explain to you.

MARGARET (*relenting*) He told me you'd agreed to ask me and the boys not to come here—but then, we hardly ever did.

BROWN. But you might! (*Then with confidential friendliness*) This is for his sake, Margaret. I know Dion. He's got to be able to work without distractions. He's not the ordinary man, you appreciate that. And this design means his whole future! He's to get full credit for it, and as soon as it's accepted, I take him into partnership. It's all agreed. And after that I'm going to take a long vacation—go to Europe for a couple of years—and leave everything here in Dion's hands! Hasn't he told you all this?

MARGARET. (*jubilant now*) Yes—but I could hardly believe . . . (*Proudly*) I'm sure he can do it. He's been like a new man lately, so full of ambition and energy! It's made me so happy! (*She stops in confusion*)

BROWN. (*deeply moved, takes her hand impulsively*) And it has made me happy, too!

MARGARET (*confused—with an amused laugh*) Why, Billy Brown! For a moment, I thought it was

Dion, your voice sounded so much

BROWN (*with sudden desperation*) Margaret, I've got to tell you! I can't go on like this any longer! I've got to confess . . . There's something . . . !

MARGARET (*alarmed*) Not—not about Dion?

BROWN (*harshly*) To hell with Dion! To hell with Billy Brown! (*He tears off his mask and reveals a suffering face that is ravaged and haggard, his own face tortured and distorted by the demon of Dion's* 10 *mask*) Think of me! I love you, Margaret! Leave him! I've always loved you! Come away with me! I'll sell out here! We'll go abroad and be happy!

MARGARET. (*amazed*) Billy Brown, do you realize what you're saying? (*With a shudder*) Are you crazy? Your face—is terrible. You're sick! Shall I phone for a doctor?

BROWN (*turning away slowly and putting on his mask—dully*) No. I've been on the verge—of a breakdown—for some time. I get spells. . . I'm 20 better now. (*He turns back to her*) Forgive me! Forget what I said! But, for all our sakes, don't come here again.

MARGARET (*coldly*) After this—I assure you . . . ! (*Then looking at him with pained incredulity*) Why, Billy—I simply won't believe—after all these years . . . !

BROWN. It will never happen again. Good-by.

MARGARET. Good-by (*Then, wishing to leave on a pleasant change of subject—forcing a smile*) Don't 30 work Dion to death! He's never home for dinner any more. (*She goes out past the DRAFTSMAN and off right, rear. BROWN sits down at his desk, taking off the mask again. He stares at it with bitter, cynical amusement*).

BROWN. You're dead, William Brown, dead beyond hope of resurrection! It's the Dion you buried in your garden who killed you, not you him. It's Margaret's husband who . . . (*He laughs harshly*) Paradise by proxy! Love by mistaken identity! God! 40 (*This is almost a prayer—then fiercely defiant*) But it is paradise! I do love! (*As he is speaking, a well-dressed, important, stout man enters the drafting room. He is carrying a rolled-up plan in his hand. He nods condescendingly and goes directly to BROWN's door, on which he raps sharply, and, without waiting for an answer, turns the knob. BROWN has just time to turn his head and get his mask on*)

MAN. (*briskly*) Ah, good morning! I came right in. Hope I didn't disturb . . . ?

BROWN. (*the successful architect now—urbanely*) Not at all, sir. How are you? (*They shake hands*) Sit down. Have a cigar. And now what can I do for you this morning?

MAN. (*unrolling his plan*) It's your plan. My wife and I have been going over it again. We like it—and we don't—and when a man plans to lay out half a million, why he wants everything exactly right, eh? (BROWN *nods*) It's too cold, too spare, too like a tomb, if you'll pardon me, for a liveable home. 10 Can't you liven it up, put in some decorations, make it fancier and warmer—you know what I mean. (*Looks at him a bit doubtfully*) People tell me you had an assistant, Anthony, who was a real shark on these details but that you've fired him—

BROWN. (*suavely*) Gossip! He's still with me but, for reasons of his own, doesn't wish it known. Yes, I trained him and he's very ingenious. I'll turn this right over to him and instruct him to carry out your wishes. . . .

CURTAIN

Scene Two

SCENE. *The same as Act Two, Scene Three—the library of BROWN's home about eight the same night. He can be heard feeling his way in through the dark. He switches on the reading lamp on the table. Directly under it on a sort of stand is the mask of DION, its empty eyes staring front.*

BROWN *takes off his own mask and lays it on the table before DION's. He flings himself down in the chair and stares without moving into the eyes of DION's mask. Finally, he begins to talk to it in a bitter, mocking tone.*

BROWN. Listen! Today was a narrow escape—for us! We can't avoid discovery much longer. We must get our plot to working! We've already made William Brown's will, leaving you his money and business. 40 We must hustle off to Europe now—and murder him there! (*A bit tauntingly*) Then you—the I in you—I will live with Margaret happily ever after. (*More tauntingly*) She will have children by me! (*He seems to hear some mocking denial from the mask. He bends toward it*) What? (*Then with a sneer*) Anyway, that doesn't matter! Your children already love me more than they ever loved you! And Margaret loves me more! You think you've won, do you—that

I've got to vanish into you in order to live? Not yet, my friend! Never! Wait! Gradually Margaret will love what is beneath—me! Little by little I'll teach her to know me, and then finally I'll reveal myself to her, and confess that I stole your place out of love for her, and she'll understand and forgive and love me! And you'll be forgotten! Ha! (*Again he bends down to the mask as if listening—torturedly*) What's that? She'll never believe? She'll never see? She'll never understand? You lie, devil! (*He reaches out his hands as if to take the mask by the throat, then shrinks back with a shudder of hopeless despair*) God have mercy! Let me believe! Blessed are the merciful! Let me obtain mercy! (*He waits, his face upturned—pleadingly*) Not yet? (*Despairingly*) Never? (*A pause. Then, in a sudden panic of dread, he reaches out for the mask of DION like a dope fiend after a drug. As soon as he holds it, he seems to gain strength and is able to force a sad laugh*) Now I am 20 drinking your strength, Dion—strength to love in this world and die and sleep and become fertile earth, as you are becoming now in my garden—your weakness the strength of my flowers, your failure as an artist painting their petals with life! (*Then, with bravado*) Come with me while Margaret's bridegroom dresses in your clothes, Mr. Anthony! I need the devil when I'm in the dark! (*He goes off left, but can be heard talking*) Your clothes begin to fit me better than my own! Hurry, Brother! It's time 30 we were home. Our wife is waiting! (*He reappears, having changed his coat and trousers*) Come with me and tell her again I love her! Come and hear her tell me how she loves you! (*He suddenly cannot help kissing the mask*) I love you because she loves you! My kisses on your lips are for her! (*He puts the mask over his face and stands for a moment, seeming to grow tall and proud—then with a laugh of bold self-assurance*) Out by the back way! I mustn't forget I'm a desperate criminal, pursued by God, and by myself! (*He goes out right, laughing with amused satisfaction*).

CURTAIN

Scene Three

SCENE. *Is the same as Scene One of Act One—the sitting-room of MARGARET's home. It is about half an hour after the last scene. MARGARET sits on the sofa, waiting with the anxious, impatient expectancy*

of one deeply in love She is dressed with a careful, subtle extra touch to attract the eye She looks young and happy She is trying to read a book The front door is heard opening and closing She leaps up and runs back to throw her arms around BROWN as he enters from right, rear She kisses him passionately

MARGARET (*as he recoils with a sort of guilt—laughingly*) Why, you hateful old thing, you! I really believe you were trying to avoid kissing me! 10 Well, just for that, I'll never

BROWN (*with fierce, defiant passion, kisses her again and again*) Margaret!

MARGARET Call me Peggy again You used to when you really loved me (*Softly*) Remember the school commencement dance—you and I on the dock in the moonlight?

BROWN. (*with pain*) No (*He takes his arms from around her*).

MARGARET (*still holding him—with a laugh*) 20 Well, I like that! You old bear, you! Why not?

BROWN (*sadly*) It was so long ago.

MARGARET (*a bit melancholy*) You mean you don't want to be reminded that we're getting old?

BROWN. Ycs. (*He kisses her gently*) I'm tired Let's sit down (*They sit on the sofa, his arm about her, her head on his shoulder*).

MARGARET. (*with a happy sigh*) I don't mind remembering—now I'm happy It's only when I'm unhappy that it hurts—and I've been so happy lately, 30 dear—and so grateful to you! (*He stirs uneasily. She goes on joyfully*) Everything's changed! I'd gotten pretty resigned to—and sad and hopeless, too—and then all at once you turn right around and everything is the same as when we were first married—much better even, for I was never sure of you then. You were always so strange and aloof and alone, it seemed I was never really touching you. But now I feel you've become quite human—like me—and I'm so happy, dear! (*She kisses him*)

BROWN (*his voice trembling*) Then I have made you happy—happier than ever before—no matter what happens? (*She nods*) Then—that justifies everything! (*He forces a laugh*).

MARGARET. Of course it does! I've always known that But you—you wouldn't be—or you couldn't be—and I could never help you—and all the time I knew you were so lonely! I could always hear you calling to me that you were lost, but I couldn't find

the path to you because I was lost, too! That's an awful way for a wife to feel! (*She laughs—joyfully*) But now you're here! You're mine! You're my long-lost lover, and my husband, and my big boy, too!

BROWN (*with a trace of jealousy*) Where are your other big boys tonight?

MARGARET Out to a dance They've all acquired girls, I'll have you know

BROWN (*mockingly*) Aren't you jealous?

MARGARET (*gayly*) Of course! Terribly! But I'm diplomatic I don't let them see (*Changing the subject*) Believe me, they've noticed the change in you! The eldest was saying to me today "It's great not to have Father so nervous, any more Why, he's a regular sport when he gets started!" And the other two said very solemnly "You bet!" (*She laughs*)

BROWN. (*brokenly*) I—I'm glad

MARGARET Dion! You're crying!

BROWN (*stung by the name, gets up—harshly*) Nonsense! Did you ever know Dion to cry about anyone?

MARGARET (*sadly*) You couldn't—then. You were too lonely You had no one to cry to

BROWN (*goes and takes a rolled-up plan from the table drawer—dully*) I've got to do some work

MARGARET (*disappointedly*) What, has that old Billy Brown got you to work at home again, too?

BROWN (*ironically*) It's for Dion's good, you know—and yours.

MARGARET (*making the best of it—cheerfully*) All right. I won't be selfish. It really makes me proud to have you so ambitious Let me help. (*She brings his drawing-board, which he puts on the table and pins his plan upon She sits on sofa and picks up her book*).

BROWN. (*carefully casual*) I hear you were in to see me today?

MARGARET. Yes, and Billy wouldn't hear of it! I 40 was quite furious until he convinced me it was all for the best. When is he going to take you into partnership?

BROWN Very soon now.

MARGARET. And will he really give you full charge when he goes abroad?

BROWN Yes

MARGARET (*practically*) I'd pin him down if I could Promises are all right, but—(*she hesitates*) I don't trust him

BROWN. (*with a start, sharply*) What makes you say that?

MARGARET. Oh, something that happened today.

BROWN. What?

MARGARET. I don't mean I blame him, but—to be frank, I think the Great God Brown, as you call him, is getting a bit queer and it's time he took a vacation. Don't you?

BROWN. (*his voice a bit excited—but guardedly*) But why? What did he do?

MARGARET. (*hesitatingly*) Well—it's really too silly—he suddenly got awfully strange. His face scared me. It was like a corpse. Then he raved on some nonsense about he'd always loved me. He went on like a perfect fool! (*She looks at BROWN, who is staring at her. She becomes uneasy*) Maybe I shouldn't tell you this. He simply wasn't responsible. Then he came to himself and was all right and begged my pardon and seemed dreadfully sorry, and I felt sorry for him. (*Then with a shudder*) But honestly, Dion, it was just too disgusting for words to hear him! (*With kind, devastating contempt*) Poor Billy!

BROWN. (*with a show of tortured derision*) Poor Billy! Poor Billy the Goat! (*With mocking frenzy*) I'll kill him for you! I'll serve you his heart for breakfast!

MARGARET. (*jumping up—frightenedly*) Dion!

BROWN. (*waving his pencil knife with grotesque flourishes*) I tell you I'll murder this God-damned disgusting Great God Brown who stands like a fatted calf in the way of our health and wealth and happiness!

MARGARET. (*bewilderedly, not knowing how much he is pretending, puts an arm about him*) Don't, dear! You're being horrid and strange again. It makes me afraid you haven't really changed, after all.

BROWN. (*unheeding*) And then my wife can be happy! Ha! (*He laughs. She begins to cry. He controls himself—pats her head—gently*) All right, dear. Mr. Brown is now safely in hell. Forget him!

MARGARET. (*stops crying—but still worriedly*) I should never have told you—but I never imagined you'd take it seriously. I've never thought of Billy Brown except as a friend, and lately not even that! He's just a stupid old fool!

BROWN. Ha-ha! Didn't I say he was in hell? They're torturing him! (*Then controlling himself again—exhaustedly*) Please leave me alone now. I've got to work.

MARGARET. All right, dear. I'll go into the next room and anything you want, just call. (*She pats his face—cajolingly*) Is it all forgotten?

BROWN. Will you be happy?

MARGARET. Yes.

BROWN. Then it's dead, I promise! (*She kisses him and goes out. He stares ahead, then shakes off his thoughts and concentrates on his work—mockingly*) Our beautiful new Capitol calls you, Mr. Dion! To work! We'll adroitly hide old Silenus on the cupola! Let him dance over their law-making with his eternal leer! (*He bends over his work*).

CURTAIN

Act Four

Scene One

SCENE. *Same as Scene One of Act Three—the drafting room and BROWN's office. It is dusk of a day about a month later. The TWO DRAFTSMEN are bent over their table working.*

BROWN. (*at his desk, is working feverishly over a plan. He is wearing the mask of DION. The mask of WILLIAM BROWN rests on the desk beside him. As he works, he chuckles with malicious glee—finally flings down his pencil with a flourish*).

BROWN. Done! In the name of the Almighty Brown, amen, amen! Here's a wondrous fair capitol! The design would do just as well for a Home for Criminal Imbeciles! Yet to them, such is my art, it will appear to possess a pure common-sense, a fat-bellied finality, as dignified as the suspenders of an assemblyman! Only to me will that pompous façade reveal itself as the wearily ironic grin of Pan as, his ears drowsy with the crumbling hum of past and future civilizations, he half-listens to the laws passed by his fleas to enslave him! Ha-ha-ha! (*He leaps grotesquely from behind his desk and cuts a few goatish capers, laughing with lustful merriment*) Long live Chief of Police Brown! District Attorney Brown! Alderman Brown! Assemblyman Brown! Mayor Brown! Congressman Brown! Governor Brown! Senator Brown! President Brown! *He chants*) Oh, how many persons in one God make up the good God Brown! Hahahaha! *The TWO DRAFTSMEN in the next room have stopped work and are listening*).

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN. Drunk as a fool!

OLDER DRAFTSMAN. At least Dion used to have the decency to stay away from the office—

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN. Funny how it's got hold of Brown so quick!

OLDER DRAFTSMAN. He was probably hitting it up on the Q T all the time

BROWN (*has come back to his desk, laughing to himself and out of breath*) Time to become respectable again! (*He takes off the DION mask and reaches out for the WILLIAM BROWN one—then stops, with a hand on each, staring down on the plan with fascinated loathing. His real face is now sick, ghastly, tortured, hollow-cheeked and feverish-eyed*) Ugly! Hideous! Despicable! Why must the demon in me pander to cheapness—then punish me with self-loathing and life-hatred? Why am I not strong enough to perish—or blind enough to be content? (*To heaven, bitterly but pleadingly*) Give me the strength to destroy this!—and myself!—and him!—and I will believe in Thee! (*While he has been speaking there has been a noise from the stars. The TWO DRAFTSMEN have bent over their work. MARGARET enters, closing the door behind her. At this sound, BROWN starts. He immediately senses who it is—with alarm*) Margaret! (*He grabs up both masks and goes into room off right*)

MARGARET (*she looks healthy and happy, but her face wears a worried, solicitous expression—pleasantly to the staring DRAFTSMEN*) Good morning Oh, you needn't look worried, it's Mr Brown I want to see, not my husband

YOUNGER D (*hesitatingly*) He's locked himself in—but maybe if you'll knock—

MARGARET (*knocks—somewhat embarrassedly*) Mr. Brown! (*BROWN enters his office, wearing the WILLIAM BROWN mask. He comes quickly to the other door and unlocks it*).

BROWN. (*with a hectic cordiality*) Come on, Margaret! Enter! This is delightful! Sit down! What can I do for you?

MARGARET. (*taken aback—a bit stiffly*) Nothing much

BROWN. Something about Dion, of course. Well, your darling pet is all right—never better!

MARGARET. (*coldly*) That's a matter of opinion. I think you're working him to death

BROWN. Oh, no, not him. It's Brown who is to die. We've agreed on that

MARGARET. (*giving him a queer look*) I'm serious.

BROWN. So am I. Deadly serious! Hahaha!

MARGARET (*checking her indignation*) That's what I came to see you about. Really, Dion has acted so hectic and on edge lately I'm sure he's on the verge of a breakdown

BROWN. Well, it certainly isn't drunk. He hasn't had a drop. He doesn't need it! Haha! And I haven't either, although the gossips are beginning to say I'm soused all the time! It's because I've started to laugh! Hahaha! They can't believe in joy in this town except by the bottle! What funny little people! Hahaha! When you're the Great God Brown, eh, Margaret? Hahaha!

MARGARET. (*getting up—uneasily*) I'm afraid I—

BROWN. Don't be afraid, my dear! I won't make love to you again! Honor bright! I'm too near the grave for such folly! But it must have been funny for you when you came here the last time—watching a disgusting old fool like me, eh?—too funny for words! Hahaha! (*Then with a sudden movement he flourishes the design before her*) Look! We've finished it! Dion has finished it! His fame is made!

MARGARET (*tartly*) Really, Billy, I believe you are drunk!

BROWN. Nobody kisses me—so you can all believe the worst! Hahaha!

MARGARET (*chillingly*) Then if Dion is through, why can't I see him?

BROWN. (*crazily*) See Dion? See Dion? Well, why not? It's an age of miracles. The streets are full of Lazaruses. Pray! I mean—wait a moment, if you please

(*BROWN disappears into the room off right. A moment later he reappears in the mask of DION. He holds out his arms and MARGARET rushes into them. They kiss passionately. Finally he sits with her on the lounge*).

MARGARET. So you've finished it

BROWN. Yes. The Committee is coming to see it soon. I've made all the changes they'll like, the fools!

MARGARET (*lovingly*) And can we go on that second honeymoon, right away now?

BROWN. In a week or so, I hope—as soon as I've gotten Brown off to Europe

MARGARET. Tell me— isn't he drinking hard?

BROWN. (*laughing as BROWN did*) Haha! Soused to the ears all the time! Soused on life! He can't stand it! It's burning his insides out!

MARGARET. (*alarmed*) Dear! I'm worried about

you. You sound as crazy as he did—when you laugh! You must rest!

BROWN. (*controlling himself*) I'll rest in peace—when he's gone!

MARGARET. (*with a queer look*) Why, Dion, that isn't your suit. It's just like—

BROWN. It's his. We're getting to be like twins. I'm inheriting his clothes already! (*Then calming himself as he sees how frightened she is*) Don't be worried, dear. I'm just a trifle elated, now the job's done. I guess I'm a bit soused on life, too! (*The COMMITTEE, three important-looking, average personages, come into the drafting-room*).

MARGARET. (*forcing a smile*) Well, don't let it burn your insides out!

BROWN. No danger! Mine were tempered in hell! Hahaha!

MARGARET. (*kissing him, coaxingly*) Come home, dear—please!

OLDER DRAFTSMAN. (*knocks on the door*) The COMMITTEE is here, Mr. Brown.

BROWN. (*hurriedly to MARGARET*) You receive them. Hand them the design. I'll get Brown. (*He raises his voice*) Come right in, gentlemen. (*He goes off right, as the COMMITTEE enter the office. When they see MARGARET, they stop in surprise*).

MARGARET. (*embarrassedly*) Good afternoon. Mr. Brown will be right with you. (*They bow, MARGARET holds out the design to them*) This is my husband's design. He finished it today.

COMMITTEE. Ah! (*They crowd around to look at it—with enthusiasm*) Perfect! Splendid! Couldn't be better! Exactly what we suggested!

MARGARET. (*joyfully*) Then you accept it? Mr. Anthony will be so pleased!

MEMBER. Mr. Anthony?

ANOTHER. Is he working here again?

THIRD. Did I understand you to say this was your husband's design?

MARGARET. (*excitedly*) Yes! Entirely his! He's worked like a dog—(*Appalled*) You don't mean to say—Mr. Brown never told you? (*They shake their heads in solemn surprise*) Oh, the contemptible cad! I hate him!

BROWN. (*appearing at right—mockingly*) Hate me, Margaret! Hate Brown? How superfluous! (*Oratorically*) Gentlemen, I have been keeping a secret from you in order that you might be the more impressed when I revealed it. That design is entirely the in-

spiration of Mr. Dion Anthony's genius. I had nothing to do with it.

MARGARET. (*contritely*) Oh, Billy! I'm sorry! Forgive me!

BROWN. (*ignoring her, takes the plan from the COMMITTEE and begins unpinning it from the board—mockingly*) I can see by your faces you have approved this. You are delighted, aren't you? And why not, my dear sirs? Look at it, and look at you! Hahaha! It'll immortalize you, my good men! You'll be as death-defying a joke as any in Joe Miller! (*Then with a sudden complete change of tone—angrily*) You damn fools! Can't you see this is an insult—a terrible, blasphemous insult!—that this embittered failure Anthony is hurling in the teeth of our success—an insult to you, to me, to you, Margaret—and to Almighty God! (*In a frenzy of fury*) And if you are weak and cowardly enough to stand for it, I'm not! (*He tears the plan into four pieces. The COMMITTEE stands aghast. MARGARET runs forward*).

MARGARET. (*in a scream*) You coward! Dion! Dion! (*She picks up the plan and hugs it to her bosom*).

BROWN. (*with a sudden goatish caper*) I'll tell him you're here. (*He disappears, but reappears almost immediately in the mask of DION. He is imposing a terrible discipline on himself to avoid dancing and laughing. He speaks suavely*) Everything is all right—all for the best—you mustn't get excited! A little paste, Margaret! A little paste, gentlemen! And all will be well! Life is imperfect, Brothers! Men have their faults, Sister! But with a few drops of glue much may be done! A little dab of pasty resignation here and there—and even broken hearts may be repaired to do yeoman service! (*He has edged toward the door. They are all staring at him with petrified bewilderment. He puts his finger to his lips*) Ssssh! This is Daddy's bedtime secret for today: Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue! (*With a quick prancing movement, he has opened the door, gone through, and closed it after him silently, shaking with suppressed laughter. He springs lightly to the side of the petrified DRAFTSMEN—in a whisper*) They will find him in the little room. Mr. William Brown is dead! (*With light leaps he vanishes, his head thrown back, shaking with silent laughter. The sound of his feet leaping down the stairs, five at a time, can be heard. Then a pause of silence. The people in the two rooms*

stare *The YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN is the first to recover*)

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN (*rushing into the next room, shouts in terrified tones*) Mr Brown is dead!

COMMITTEE He murdered him! (*They all run into the little room off right MARGARET remains, stunned with horror They return in a moment, carrying the mask of WILLIAM BROWN, two on each side, as if they were carrying a body by the legs and shoulders They solemnly lay him down on the couch and stand looking down at him*).

FIRST COMMITTEEMAN (*with a frightened awe*) I can't believe he's gone.

SECOND COMMITTEEMAN (*in same tone*) I can almost hear him talking (*As if impelled, he clears his throat and addresses the mask importantly*) Mr Brown— (*Then stops short*).

THIRD COMMITTEEMAN (*shrinking back*) No. Dead, all right! (*Then suddenly, hysterically angry and terrified*) We must take steps at once to run Anthony to earth!

MARGARET. (*with a heart-broken cry*) Dion's innocent!

YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN. I'll phone for the police, sir! (*He rushes to the phone*).

CURTAIN

Scene Two

SCENE. *The same as Scene Two of Act Three—the library of WILLIAM BROWN's home. The mask of DION stands on the table beneath the light, facing front On his knees beside the table, facing front, stripped naked except for a white cloth around his loins, is BROWN. The clothes he has torn off in his agony are scattered on the floor. His eyes, his arms, his whole body strain upward, his muscles writhe with his lips as they pray silently in their agonized supplication Finally a voice seems torn out of him.*

BROWN Mercy, Compassionate Savior of Man! Out of my depths I cry to you! Mercy on thy poor clod, thy clod of unhallowed earth, thy clay, the Great God Brown! Mercy, Savior! (*He seems to wait for an answer—then leaping to his feet he puts out one hand to touch the mask like a frightened child reaching out for its nurse's hand—then with immediate mocking despair*) Bah! I am sorry, little children, but your kingdom is empty God has be-

come disgusted and moved away to some far ecstatic star where life is a dancing flame! We must die without him (*Then—addressing the mask—harshly*) Together, my friend! You, too! Let Margaret suffer! Let the whole world suffer as I am suffering! (*There is a sound of a door being pushed violently open, padding feet in slippers, and CYBEL, wearing her mask, runs into the room She stops short on seeing BROWN and the mask, and stares from one to the other for a second in confusion She is dressed in a black kimono robe and wears slippers over her bare feet Her yellow hair hangs down in a great mane over her shoulders She has grown stouter, has more of the deep objective calm of an idol*)

BROWN (*staring at her—fascinated—with great peace as if her presence comforted him*) Cybel! I was coming to you! How did you know?

CYBEL (*takes off her mask and looks from BROWN to the DION mask, now with a great understanding*) So that's why you never came to me again! You are Dion Brown!

BROWN. (*bitterly*) I am the remains of William Brown! (*He points to the mask of DION*) I am his murderer and his murdered!

CYBEL. (*with a laugh of exasperated pity*) Oh, why can't you ever learn to leave yourselves alone and leave me alone!

BROWN. (*boyishly and naively*) I am Billy.

CYBEL (*immediately, with a motherly solicitude*) Then run, Billy, run! They are hunting for someone! They came to my place, hunting for a murderer, Dion! They must find a victim! They've got to quiet their fears, to cast out their devils, or they'll never sleep soundly again! They've got to absolve themselves by finding a guilty one! They've got to kill someone now, to live! You're naked! You must be Satan! Run, Billy, run! They'll come here! I ran here to warn—someone! So run away if you want to live!

40 BROWN. (*like a sulky child*) I'm too tired. I don't want to.

CYBEL (*with motherly calm*) All right, you needn't, Billy Don't sulk. (*As a noise comes from outside*) Anyway, it's too late I hear them in the garden now.

BROWN. (*listening, puts out his hand and takes the mask of DION—as he gains strength, mockingly*) Thanks for this one last favor, Dion! Listen! Your avengers! Standing on your grave in the garden!

Hahaha! (He puts on the mask and springs to the left and makes a gesture as if flinging French windows open. Gayly mocking) Welcome, dumb worshippers! I am your Great God Brown! I have been advised to run from you but it is my almighty whim to dance into escape over your prostrate souls! (Shouts from the garden and a volley of shots. BROWN staggers back and falls on the floor by the couch, mortally wounded).

CYBEL. (runs to his side, lifts him on to the couch and takes off the mask of DION) You can't take this to bed with you. You've got to go to sleep alone. (She places the mask of DION back on its stand under the light and puts on her own, just as, after a banging of doors, crashing of glass, trampling of feet, a Squad of Police with drawn revolvers, led by a grizzly, brutal-faced Captain, run into the room. They are followed by MARGARET, still distractedly clutching the pieces of the plan to her breast).

CAPTAIN. (pointing to the mask of DION—triumphantly) Got him! He's dead!

MARGARET. (throws herself on her knees, takes the mask and kisses it—heart-brokenly) Dion! Dion! (Her face hidden in her arms, the mask in her hands above her bowed head, she remains, sobbing with deep, silent grief).

CAPTAIN. (noticing CYBEL and BROWN—startled) Hey! Look at this! What're you doin' here? Who's he?

CYBEL. You ought to know. You croaked him!

CAPTAIN. (with a defensive snarl—hastily) It was Anthony! I saw his mug! This feller's an accomplice, I bet yuh! Serves him right! Who is he? Friend o' yours! Crook! What's his name? Tell me or I'll fix yuh!

CYBEL. Billy.

CAPTAIN. Billy what?

CYBEL. I don't know. He's dying. (Then suddenly) Leave me alone with him and maybe I'll get him to squeal it.

CAPTAIN. Yuh better! I got to have a clean report. I'll give yuh a couple o' minutes. (He motions to the Policemen, who follow him off left. CYBEL takes off her mask and sits down by BROWN's head. He makes an effort to raise himself toward her and she helps him, throwing her kimono over his bare body, drawing his head on to her shoulder).

BROWN. (snuggling against her—gratefully) The earth is warm.

CYBEL. (soothingly, looking before her like an idol) Sssh! Go to sleep, Billy.

BROWN. Yes, Mother. (Then explainingly) It was dark and I couldn't see where I was going and they all picked on me.

CYBEL. I know. You're tired.

BROWN. And when I wake up . . . ?

CYBEL. The sun will be rising again.

BROWN. To judge the living and the dead! (Frightenedly) I don't want justice. I want love.

CYBEL. There is only love.

BROWN. Thank you, Mother. (Then feebly) I'm getting sleepy. What's the prayer you taught me—Our Father—?

CYBEL. (with calm exultance) Our Father Who Art!

BROWN. (taking her tone—exultantly) Who art! Who art! (Suddenly—with ecstasy) I know! I have found Him! I hear Him speak! "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall laugh!"²¹ Only he that has wept can laugh! The laughter of Heaven sows earth with a rain of tears, and out of Earth's transfigured birth-pain the laughter of Man returns to bless and play again in innumerable dancing gales of flame upon the knees of God!²² (He dies).

CYBEL. (gets up and fixes his body on the couch. She bends down and kisses him gently—she straightens up and looks into space—with a profound pain) Always spring comes again bearing life! Always again! Always, always forever again!—Spring again!—life again!—summer and fall and death and peace again!—(with agonized sorrow)—but always, always, love and conception and birth and pain again—spring bearing the intolerable chalice of life again!—(then with agonized exultance)—bearing the glorious, blazing crown of life again! (She stands like an idol of Earth, her eyes staring out over the world).

MARGARET. (lifting her head adoringly to the mask—triumphant tenderness mingled with her grief) My lover! My husband! My boy! (She kisses the mask) Good-by. Thank you for happiness! And you're not dead, sweetheart! You can never die till my heart dies! You will live forever! You will sleep under my heart! I will feel you stirring in your sleep, forever under my heart! (She kisses the mask again. There is a pause).

²¹ Luke vi:21.

²² This final speech is reminiscent of Nietzsche in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

CAPTAIN (*comes just into sight at left and speaks front without looking at them—gruffly*) Well, what's his name?

CYBFL Man!

CAPTAIN (*taking a gunny notebook and an inch-long pencil from his pocket*) How d'yuh spell it?

CURTAIN

Epilogue

SCENE *Four years later The same spot on the same dock as in Prologue on another moonlight night in June. The sound of the waves and of distant dance music.*

MARGARET and her THREE SONS appear from the right. The eldest is now eighteen All are dressed in the height of correct Prep-school elegance They are all tall, athletic, strong and handsome-looking They loom up around the slight figure of their mother like protecting giants, giving her a strange aspect of lonely, detached, small femininity. She wears her mask of the proud, indulgent Mother. She has grown appreciably older. Her hair is now a beautiful gray There is about her manner and voice the sad but contented feeling of one who knows her life-purpose well accomplished but is at the same time a bit empty and comfortless with the finality of it. She is wrapped in a gray cloak

ELDEST Doesn't Bec look beautiful tonight, Mother?

NEXT Don't you think Mabel's the best dancer in there, Mother?

YOUNGEST. Aw, Alice has them both beat, hasn't she, Mother?

MARGARET. (*with a sad little laugh*) Each of you is right. (*Then, with strange finality*) Good-by, boys

BOYS. (*surprised*) Good-by

MARGARET It was here on a night just like this your father first—proposed to me Did you ever know that?

BOYS (*embarrassedly*) No

MARGARET. (*yearningly*) But the nights now are so much colder than they used to be. Think of it, I went in moonlight bathing in June when I was a girl It was so warm and beautiful in those days I remember the Junes when I was carrying you boys— (*A pause.*) They fidget uneasily. She asks pleadingly) Promise me faithfully never to forget your father!

BOYS (*uncomfortably*) Yes, Mother

MARGARET (*forcing a joking tone*) But you mustn't waste June on an old woman like me! Go in and dance. (*As they hesitate dutifully*) Go on I really want to be alone—with my Junes.

BOYS. (*unable to conceal their eagerness*) Yes, Mother (*They go away*)

MARGARET. (*slowly removes her mask, laying it on the bench, and stares up at the moon with a wistful, resigned sweetness*) So long ago! And yet I'm still the same Margaret It's only our lives that grow old We are where centuries only count as seconds and after a thousand lives our eyes begin to open—(*She looks around her with a rapt smile*)—and the moon rests in the sea! I want to feel the moon at peace in the sea! I want Dion to leave the sky for me! I want him to sleep in the tides of my heart! (*She slowly takes from under her cloak, from her bosom, as if from her heart, the mask of DION as it was at the last and holds it before her face*) My lover! My husband! My boy! You can never die till my heart dies! You will live forever. You are sleeping under my heart! I feel you stirring in your sleep, forever under my heart (*She kisses him on the lips with a timeless kiss*).

CURTAIN

AMERICAN POETRY SINCE 1900

If Stephen Crane's poems had been read and admired by more than a very small and almost private audience, "modern" American poetry might be said to date from *The Black Riders* and *War Is Kind*, for in both technique and themes these collections broke as completely with the past as the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* had done half a century earlier. But Crane's poetry has had almost no influence whatever. In the 1930's and 1940's his *Collected Poems* went through several editions and was widely praised, but only because his free verse rhythms and harsh naturalism were no longer a novelty; the age which he anticipated had finally arrived, though he had had nothing to do with its arrival.

The most popular of the New England poets, Longfellow, Holmes, Whittier, and Lowell, lived and wrote late into the nineteenth century, but they merely continued the pre-Civil War traditions. America's three most original poets of this half century, Whitman, Lanier, and Emily Dickinson, had gained a loyal though small band of readers by 1900, but as yet they had had slight literary influence in their native land. E. C. Stedman gave them generous space in his *American Anthology* (1900), but three other poets in the volume, R. W. Gilder, R. H. Stoddard, and Stedman himself, were typical of the period, with their genteel society verse and their pale reflections of Longfellow. In the 1890's American readers had been captivated by the "Vagabondia" songs written by the Dartmouth poet, Richard Hovey, and the Canadian, Bliss Carman, both influenced by the romanticism of Stevenson and Kipling. Although these men professed admiration for Walt Whitman, their songs of the open road were based on a juvenile desire to escape from a society growing increasingly disagreeable to sensitive minds. Bliss Carman's social protest was a romantic gesture of flight into June sunshine. In 1899 Edwin Markham attempted to express his sympathy for the poor and downtrodden in his Millet-inspired poem, "The Man with the Hoe," which was to become familiar to every grammar-school boy and girl in the land and to be translated into several languages, but time has revealed its banal sentiment and trite diction. Markham was a jour-

nalist, not a literary poet, and the same was true of the popular Californian, Joaquin Miller, and the still more widely read folksy versifier of Indiana, James Whitcomb Riley, who sang of a barefoot boy's country utopia. In a memorial address for Riley in 1916 Hamlin Garland said of him: "He expressed something of the wistful sadness of the middle-aged man who is looking back on the sunlit streams of boyhood." This attitude typified not only Riley but the general level of American poetry in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, however, there were serious and even gifted poets. One of them was William Vaughn Moody, who had taught at Harvard and was the literary sensation of the University of Chicago. He had education, talent, and ambition; and his play, *The Great Divide*, was a Broadway success, but today his poems seem anemic. Moody associated with a group of poets in New York City, which included MacKaye, Torrence, and others.

A poet of this period likely to be remembered is George Santayana, who published three volumes of finely-wrought verse between 1894 and 1901. Santayana was then teaching philosophy at Harvard, and his poems gave expression to the same ironic, detached view of life which constituted the subject matter of his later philosophical books, including that exotic best-selling novel, *The Last Puritan*. Santayana was born in Spain, was never happy in America, and his poetry has little in common with either English or American literary traditions, but as he modestly claimed in the preface to his selected *Poems* (1922), his "verses, mental and thin as their texture may be, represent a true inspiration . . ." Still another poet who wrote in a minor key but produced exquisite lyrics within her own narrow limits was Lizette Woodworth Reese, of Baltimore. Her subjects, from *A Branch of May* in 1887 to *Wild Cherry* in 1927, *Pastures* in 1933, and *An Old House in the Country* in 1936, never ranged far from the beautiful Maryland countryside and the pastoral life of her Victorian youth. A third minor poet, more popular than either Santayana or Miss Reese but weaker in craftsmanship, was Sara Teasdale, who specialized

in mildly sophisticated love songs and tributes to Duse, Guenevere, Beatrice, and Sappho

Meanwhile the one major poet of the early twentieth century in American, Edwin Arlington Robinson, worked for a great many years in comparative obscurity. From his sonnets and short poems of the nineties through his long dramatic monologues, such as *Captain Craig* (1902), to his later treatment of the Arthurian stories, he was always concerned with problems of the conscience and the quality of life. The gloom and amorphous pessimism of his early poems are often analogous to the moods of the French Symbolists, who may have influenced him during his study of French at Harvard in 1891-93 (or even earlier), but most critics have traced his intellectual descent through Hawthorne and Henry James. Henry Wells says in *The American Way of Poetry*

Robinson is the poet of the soul as seen partly with modern eyes and partly from the intense self-scrutiny of the traditional New England idealist. He is a natural mystic, a discerning moralist, an intuitive psychologist, and our last major author to write with deep marks of the New England conscience.

Within the frame of conventional versification Robinson achieved a colloquial blank verse exactly suited to his introspective soliloquies and psychological narratives. No previous American poet had had such complete command of this form of verse. It could be as realistic as the prose of a novelist, without losing the grace of poetic rhythm, or as imaginative as Browning's dramatic monologues, as in that marvelous interpretation of Shakespeare's inner compulsions in "Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford." Robinson was a master of understatement and ironic wit. Despite the length and tediousness of some of his highly intellectual narratives, no American poetry produced during his lifetime is likely to endure longer than his.

Robinson was not, however, a part of the so-called "poetic renaissance" of the period of World War I. Harriet Monroe and her followers liked to think that the founding of her magazine, *Poetry*, in Chicago in 1912 ushered in a new age of poetic activity, and it did undoubtedly stimulate experimentation and encourage young poets who had not yet found an audience. She published T. S. Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and was one of the first to give recognition to Wallace Stevens and Conrad Aiken, intellectual experimenters who had been influenced by the French Symbolists. But the trio of whom Miss Monroe was proudest were Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, and Carl Sandburg, especially Sandburg.

They attempted to create a new poetic art out of Midwestern materials and to invent literary techniques appropriate for their sprawling subjects. Masters' main achievement was his realistic character sketches in *Spoon River Anthology*, written in a free verse as unadorned as the diction of the *Greek Anthology*, the poet's obvious model. Lindsay was concerned primarily with sound effects, the booming of bass drums, the braying of saxophones, the lonesome echo of the train whistle across the prairie. He was a noisy poet-evangelist in the jazz age. Sandburg also attempted to express the brawn, crude vitality, and the hectic activity of his region and time, but he was more versatile than either Masters or Lindsay. He could write not only of Chicago, "Hog-butcher for the world," but delicately of the fog coming "on little cat feet" and "Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November." When he tried, Sandburg could be as lyrical as any modern American poet, or he could propagandize for socialism and "the people." In one of his later books, *The People, Yes*, he is also a folklorist, a specialist in dialect and slang, and a cracker-barrel philosopher. In Sandburg, the poet is so intermingled with journalist, actor, and professional "common man" that he is difficult to classify and impossible to evaluate definitively so long as he is still living and able to surprise his readers and critics. But whatever his final rank in literary history, he is unquestionably *the* poet of the American people, as Whitman dreamed of being.

While Masters and Sandburg were creating a sensation with unrhymed and unmetred verse, the battle for prosodic freedom was being spectacularly fought by another group, which regarded itself as the propagator of the "renaissance." The leader of this group was Miss Amy Lowell, sister of the President of Harvard and a relative of James Russell Lowell. Though both the Harriet Monroe and the Amy Lowell factions had each its own identity, they were not entirely independent of each other. After writing some conventional poems, Miss Lowell became interested in the painting of the abstractionists, the music of Debussy, and—like so many of her contemporaries—in the poetry of the French Symbolists. In her Preface to *Men, Women, and Ghosts* (1916) she confessed: "I think it was the piano music of Debussy with its strange likeness to short vers-libre poems which first showed me the close kinship of music and poetry and there flashed into my mind the idea of using the movement of poetry in somewhat the same way that the musician uses the movement of music." She had been eagerly reading Miss Monroe's *Poetry*,

which printed some of her own compositions, and through this magazine she became aware of the "imagist" movement in England, led by the eccentric American expatriate, Ezra Pound, and most brilliantly exemplified by Hilda Doolittle ("H.D."). In 1913 Miss Lowell sailed for London with a letter of introduction to Pound from Miss Monroe. She came back as the American sponsor of "imagism" and immediately began spreading the doctrine through lectures, articles, and her own poems. The creed of this school was published in *Some Imagist Poets: An Anthology* (Boston, 1915): (1) "To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word . . ."; (2) "to create new rhythms—as the expression of new moods—and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods . . ."; (3) "to allow absolute freedom in the choice of the subject"; (4) "to present an image (hence the name, 'Imagist') . . . and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous"; (5) "to produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite"; (6) "finally . . . concentration is of the very essence of poetry." Considered in the light of English and American poetic history from Wordsworth through Whitman and Emily Dickinson, this program does not seem very revolutionary, though for several years it aroused a great amount of discussion. But by the early 1920's the campaign for free verse had been won, and no one deserved more credit for the victory than Amy Lowell. "Imagism" was quickly forgotten, but thereafter American poets were freer to write on any subject and in any manner they chose. A few of Miss Lowell's own free-verse poems, like the well-known "Patterns," will remain in anthologies for a long time, but it now seems that she was a better press-agent than poet.

None of the free-verse poets except Sandburg can compare in importance with Robert Frost, one of the most conventional modern poets in technique but original and sensitive in his lyrical expression of simple New England experience and cool wisdom. Though he was born in California and first won recognition in the British Isles with *A Boy's Will* (1913) and *North of Boston* (1914), he is unmistakably indigenous to New England, with his quiet pleasure in unsophisticated joys, his dry wit, his ironical detachment from social and political turmoil, and his proud self-reliance. These qualities were evident in *North of Boston*, in which the poet demonstrated his knowledge of regional character and speech. One of the most famous dramatic narratives of this volume is "The Death of the Hired Man." Frost's originality consists in his fresh, clear imagery

(as in "Birches") and the authentic tones of voice heard in his flowing blank verse and simple stanzas. Horace Gregory says, in *A History of Modern Poetry, 1900-1940*, that "he has assumed the mask of Horace, the Horace of 'the golden mean' between extremes . . . against the high reaches of 'modern' extravagance and taste." He has consistently retained this moderation and shrewd common sense down through *A Witness Tree* (1942) and *A Masque of Reason* (1945).

Soon after Frost's return to America another poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay, made a first appearance in traditional rime and meter. Her vivid personality and deliberately cultivated sophistication in *Renaissance* (1917), *Second April* (1921), *A Few Figs from Thistles* (1922), and *The Harp-Weaver* (1923) were the very antithesis of Frost's Horatian serenity. In this decade of social and sexual revolt she was proud that her "candle burns at both ends" and gayly announced,

What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why, I have forgotten . . .¹

This "flaming youth" pose lasted Miss Millay through the twenties, during which she reached the height of her popularity, receiving the Pulitzer Prize in 1923 and having her lyric drama, *The King's Henchman*, performed two years later by the Metropolitan Opera Association. In the 1930's she became social- and political-minded, and her poetry grew increasingly dull.

The most controversial event of the 1920's was probably the award of a prize by *The Dial*, an "advance guard" magazine in literature and art, to T. S. Eliot for his poem *The Waste Land* (1922). This novel composition, with its smooth iambs and imbedded allusions to the literature, myth, and anthropology of many countries—needing a key to be understood—infuriated most critics at first but soon generated a cult. Eliot has continued to be fiercely hated by realists like Sandburg and Hemingway, but eventually this difficult poem became a "classic" and was studied in schools and colleges. In his earlier poems, such as *The Waste Land* and "The Hollow Men," Eliot voiced the pessimism, disillusionment, and unrest of his time. His highly individual style had evolved under the esoteric influence of the French Symbolists, Ezra Pound, and "abstract" art, but these sources were balanced by Eliot's reading of the Elizabethan dramatists and the seventeenth-century poets of England, especially Donne. As he

¹ From *The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems*, published by Harper & Brothers. Copyright 1920 by Edna St. Vincent Millay.

developed his style and philosophy he acquired a religious faith in the Anglican Church, found a spiritual home in England, and became the leader of a new Anglo-American "classicism," which he propagated not only through his poems but also in lectures and essays, notably *The Sacred Wood* (1920), *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), *After Strange Gods* (1934), and *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1940). He published a volume of *Selected Essays* in 1932. Though continuing in his poems his somewhat Joycean style, with its concentrated imagery and logical discontinuities, Eliot's religious convictions and his belief in cultural tradition gave more coherence to *Ash-Wednesday* (1930) and *Four Quartets* (1943). His verse dramas, *The Rock* (1934) and *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), have been successfully produced on the stage, and some critics predict that he will bring poetry back to the theatre. He continues, however, to be fiercely denounced as decadent, snobbish, and "neo-Scholastic," to mention a few of the epithets, while he is defended with equal vigor by his admirers as the sanest and most gifted poet of his age. Since his becoming a British citizen the attacks have often been motivated by nationalism, though there will doubtless always remain a wide gulf between the Eliots and the Sandburgs. But the controversies merely prove that T. S. Eliot cannot be ignored as one of the important poets of the time, regardless of questions of aesthetics, religion, or nationality.

A poet who has drawn upon the classics (particularly Greek tragedy) in a manner very different from Eliot's is Robinson Jeffers. His father, a Biblical and classical scholar, taught him to read Greek at the age of five. At fifteen he was said to be "able to think in Italian, French, and German," and at some early stage he read Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in their own language. Jeffers' first two books of poems, *Flagons and Apples* (1912) and *Californians* (1916), both privately printed, were in conventional sonnet, blank verse, *terza rima*, and Spenserian stanza, but in *Roan Stallion* (1925) he had acquired command of an original prosodic form which might be called a free-verse hexameter. Whitman may have influenced the evolution of this long, supple line, but in accentuation it is nearer the classical hexameter. In theme, too, the tragedies of Jeffers resemble those of the Greek dramatists, though his treatment of violence in *Tamar* (1924), *Roan Stallion*, *The Women at Point Sur* (1927), *Cawdor* (1928), *Thurso's Landing* (1932), and other narratives establishes his kinship with O'Neill, Hemingway, and William Faulkner. So sensitive to inflicting pain that

he neither fishes nor hunts because he cannot bear to hurt any living thing, Jeffers recognizes violent death as the characteristic of the twentieth century, and his themes of incest, murder, and suicide are symbols of man's self-betrayal and destruction. In these tragic poems Jeffers has developed his conviction that humanity in its present form is only the beginning of the race, and he is resigned to the catastrophic end of a perverted civilization. Like Hardy he regards nature as indifferent to man's petty existence, but in his disgust with humanity he derives aesthetic pleasure in contemplating the permanence and insensitive beauty of elemental nature. Since 1914 Jeffers has lived beside the sea at Carmel, in California, where he writes in a stone tower built with his own hands—a characteristic pose. The wild beauty of the region is in his poems, and he has effectively dramatized his desire to stand aloof from a decadent society whose end he has proclaimed with the fervor of an Old Testament prophet. Many readers dislike his pessimism, but his epic vigor is impressive, except in his latest work. *Medea* (1946), an adaptation from Euripides, degenerates into melodrama. *The Double Axe* (1948) reveals Jeffers' philosophy hardened into super-isolationism, but reviewers have been willing, as one critic remarks, "to swallow the politics for the sake of the poetry."

One of the most colorful poets of the 1920's and 1930's was Hart Crane, the self-taught boy from Cleveland, Ohio, who learned his technique from the little reviews and the "arty" circles in New York. His dramatic suicide aboard a steamer in 1932 focused critical attention on his work, and he continues to be read, studied, and re-evaluated. His work is too uneven for him ever to be accepted as anything but a minor poet, but he has now gained a permanent secondary rank in the history of American literature. His first book, *White Buildings* (1926), received little notice, despite an enthusiastic introduction by Allen Tate. At the time of his death he was working on his purported masterpiece, *The Bridge* (the completed part published in 1930), which he described to his patron, Otto Kahn, the New York banker, as "an epic of the modern consciousness." To a friend he wrote, "I found that I was really building a bridge between so-called classic experience and many divergent realities of our seething, confused cosmos of today." Perhaps the work might be better described as a modern "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," for like Whitman he attempts to transcend time and space by mystic symbolism. Indeed, Whitman and Melville were major influences in Crane's poetry. Though he echoed Eliot, Cum-

mings, and Conrad Aiken, he wrote with romantic intoxication, and died before his genius had come to a ripe fruition.

Long before the stock-market crash in 1929 the excitement of the "poetic renaissance" had evaporated, and the low moral and intellectual atmosphere of the thirties did not encourage the writing of great poetry. The one poet in whom the national confidence remained alive and found expression was Stephen Vincent Benét, whose *John Brown's Body* became a best seller in 1928. It was really a novel in verse, with narrative and stylistic techniques resembling those of Dos Passos in *U S A*, though on a more popular level. As Horace Gregory has remarked, this book "reflected the taste and the popular feeling of the moment; it never failed to 'tell a story' that could be understood with the ease and vividness of a Currier and Ives print or of a mural painted by Thomas Hart Benton." The unfinished and posthumously published *Western Star* (1943) continued in much the same style, with a more assertive faith in the future of the nation. Like Sandburg in *The People*, Yes, Stephen Benét believed that "Americans are always moving on."

Archibald MacLeish also tried to meet the challenge of the depression and war-brewing years. After publishing two or three volumes of poems indebted to Eliot and Pound, he completed by 1932 a long narrative poem, *Conquistador*, on the Spanish conquest of Mexico. The form was a bold experiment in blank *terza rima*. The vivid imagery was comparable to the primitive colors and massive contours of the murals of Rivera and Orozco, and conveyed some of the revolutionary spirit of these Mexican

artists. While on the staff of *Time* and *Fortune*, for which MacLeish wrote prose unsurpassed in contemporary journalism, he experimented with dramatic verse for the radio. *The Fall of the City* (1937) and *Air Raid* (1938) seemed to provide a new medium for radio art, but no other poet has yet profited from MacLeish's brilliant examples, and his wartime duties as publicist diverted his energies into other channels.

During the years of World War II, poetry, like every other literary genre, reached almost its lowest ebb in America since the beginning of the century. Two of the most promising young poets of the forties appear to be Karl Shapiro and Robert Lowell. And it is significant that both return not only to rhyme and meter but even revive some of the rhetoric and diction so emphatically "reformed" by the imagists and free-verse experimenters. The practice of these and other recent poets indicates a reaction once more toward tradition. Especially is this true of Shapiro, whose *V-Letter* and *Essay on Rime*, written in the South Pacific during the War, are as lucid and rational as Horace's odes or Pope's "Essay on Criticism." Robert Lowell, whose second book of poems, *Lord Weary's Castle*, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1946, is closer to Eliot intellectually and about equally difficult for the beginner to read. At times his imagery sparkles like a Catherine wheel, but this effervescence springs from excess vitality and may be controlled as he matures. Most critics have confidently predicted a distinguished future for this descendant of the family of Amy and James Russell Lowell, and some think he is the precursor of a new age of form and clarity in American poetry.

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EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON (1869-1935)

Edwin Arlington Robinson was born at Head Tide, Maine, and grew up in Gardiner, the "Tilbury Town" of his poems. After two years at Harvard he was forced to leave because of straitened family circumstances. In New York he tried various means of supporting himself while writing his poems. He was working in the subway as inspector of construction when Theodore Roosevelt read *Captain Craig* in 1902 and offered him the ambassadorship to Mexico, which Robinson declined, but he accepted a position in the New York Custom House and held it from 1905 to 1910. Thereafter he did much of his writing in the summer at the MacDowell Colony for artists and writers at Peterborough, New Hampshire. The poet was shy and reserved and shunned publicity, but Roosevelt's recognition made him known to a wider public and his books began to sell. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize three times, in 1922 for his *Collected Poems*, in 1925 for *The Man Who Died Twice*, and in 1928 for *Tristram*.

Robinson's volumes of poems include *The Torrent and the Night Before* (1896), *The Children of the Night* (1897), *Captain Craig* (1902), *The Town Down the River* (1910), *The Man Against the Sky* (1916), *Merlin* (1917), *Lancelot* (1920), *The Three Taverns* (1920), *Avon's Harvest* (1921), *Collected Poems* (1921), *Roman Batholow* (1923); *The Man Who Died Twice* (1924), *Dionysus in Doubt* (1925); *Tristram* (1927); *Sonnets, 1889-1927* (1928), *Cavender's House* (1929), *The Glory of the Nightingales* (1930), *Matthias at the Door* (1931); *Nicodemus* (1932); *Talifer* (1933); *Amaranth* (1934), *King Jasper* (1935); *Collected Poems* (1937). Robinson's *Selected Letters* have been edited by Ridgely Torrence, New York, 1940. Hermann Hagedorn has written *Edwin Arlington Robinson: A Biography*, New York, 1938. Yvor Winters, *Edwin Arlington Robinson*, New York, 1946, is a critical guide to Robinson's poems. The latest biography is by Emily Neff, New York, 1948.

FROM

The Man Against the Sky (1916)

*Flammonde*¹

The man Flammonde, from God knows where,
With firm address and foreign air,
With news of nations in his talk
And something loyal in his walk,
With glint of moon in his eyes,
But never doubt, nor yet surprise,
Appeared, and stayed, and held his head
As one by kings accredited.

Erect, with his alert repose
About him, and about his clothes, 10

¹ From E. A. Robinson: *The Man Against the Sky*. Copyright 1916 by The Macmillan Company. Also E. A. Robinson: *Collected Poems*. Copyright 1921 by The Macmillan Company.

He pictured all tradition hears
Of what we owe to fifty years.
His cleansing heritage of taste
Paraded neither want nor waste;
And what he needed for his fee
To live, he borrowed graciously.

He never told us what he was,
Or what mischance, or other cause,
Had banished him from better days
To play the Prince of Castaways
Meanwhile he played surpassing well
A part, for most, unplayable;
In fine, one pauses, half afraid
To say for certain that he played.

20

For that, one may as well forego
 Conviction as to yes or no;
 Nor can I say just how intense
 Would then have been the difference
 To several, who, having striven
 In vain to get what he was given,
 Would see the stranger taken on
 By friends not easy to be won.

Moreover, many a malcontent
 He soothed and found munificent;
 His courtesy beguiled and foiled
 Suspicion that his years were soiled;
 His mien distinguished any crowd,
 His credit strengthened when he bowed;
 And women, young and old, were fond
 Of looking at the man Flammonde.

There was a woman in our town
 On whom the fashion was to frown;
 But while our talk renewed the tinge
 Of a long-faded scarlet fringe,
 The man Flammonde saw none of that,
 And what he saw we wondered at—
 That none of us, in her distress,
 Could hide or find our littleness.

There was a boy that all agreed
 Had shut within him the rare seed
 Of learning. We could understand,
 But none of us could lift a hand.
 The man Flammonde appraised the youth,
 And told a few of us the truth;
 And thereby, for a little gold,
 A flowered future was unrolled.

There were two citizens who fought
 For years and years, and over nought;
 They made life awkward for their friends,
 And shortened their own dividends.
 The man Flammonde said what was wrong
 Should be made right; nor was it long
 Before they were again in line,
 And had each other in to dine.

And these I mention are but four
 Of many out of many more.
 So much for them. But what of him—
 So firm in every look and limb?
 What small satanic sort of kink
 Was in his brain? What broken link

Withheld him from the destinies
 That came so near to being his?

What was he, when we came to sift
 His meaning, and to note the drift
 Of incommunicable ways
 30 That make us ponder while we praise?
 Why was it that his charm revealed
 Somehow the surface of a shield?
 What was it that we never caught?
 What was he, and what was he not? 80

How much it was of him we met
 We cannot ever know; nor yet
 Shall all he gave us quite atone
 For what was his, and his alone;
 Nor need we now, since he knew best,
 40 Nourish an ethical unrest:
 Rarely at once will nature give
 The power to be Flammonde and live.

We cannot know how much we learn
 From those who never will return,
 90 Until a flash of unforsecen
 Remembrance falls on what has been.
 We've each a darkening hill to climb;
 And this is why, from time to time
 In Tilbury Town, we look beyond
 Horizons for the man Flammonde.

50

1915

*Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford*²

You are a friend then, as I make it out,
 Of our man Shakespeare, who alone of us
 Will put an ass's head in Fairyland³
 As he would add a shilling to more shillings,
 All most harmonious,—and out of his
 Miraculous inviolable increase
 60 Fills Ilion,⁴ Rome, or any town you like
 Of olden time with timeless Englishman;
 And I must wonder what you think of him—
 All you down there where your small Avon flows 10
 By Stratford, and where you're an Alderman.

² From E. A. Robinson: *The Man Against the Sky*. Copyright 1916 by The Macmillan Company. Also: E. A. Robinson: *Collected Poems*. Copyright 1921 by The Macmillan Company.

In this poem Robinson cleverly summarizes not only the accepted facts of Shakespeare's life, but also the psychological conjectures of the scholars and critics.

³ Cf. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, III, 1.

⁴ Same as Ilium, Greek name for Troy (in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*).

70

Some, for a guess, would have him riding back
 To be a fairer there, or say a dyer,
 Or maybe one of your adept suiveyois,
 Or like enough the wizard of all tannois
 Not you—no fear of that, for I discern
 In you a kindling of the flame that saves—
 The nimble element, the true caloric,
 I see it, and was told of it, moreover,
 By our discriminate friend himself, no other 20
 Had you been one of the sad average,
 As he would have it,—meaning, as I take it,
 The sinew and the solvent of our Island,
 You'd not be buying beer for this Terpander's 5
 Approved and estimated friend Ben Jonson,
 He'd never foist it as a part of his
 Contingent entertainment of a townsman
 While he goes off rehearsing, as he must,
 If he shall ever be the Duke of Stratford
 And my words are no shadow on your town— 30
 Far from it, for one town's as like another
 As all are unlike London. Oh, he knows it,—
 And there's the Stratford in him, he denies it,
 And there's the Shakespeare in him So, God
 help him!

I tell him he needs Greek, 6 but neither God
 Nor Greek will help him. Nothing will help that
 man

You see the fates have given him so much,
 He must have all or perish,—or look out
 Of London, where he sees too many lords
 They're part of half what ails him I suppose 40
 There's nothing fouler down among the demons
 Than what it is he feels when he remembers
 The dust and sweat and ointment of his calling
 With his lords looking on and laughing at him
 King as he is, he can't be king *de facto*,
 And that's as well, because he wouldn't like it;
 He'd frame a lower rating of men then
 Than he has now, and after that would come
 An abdication or an apoplexy.
 He can't be king, not even king of Stratford.— 50
 Though half the world, if not the whole of it,
 May crown him with a crown that fits no king
 Save Lord Apollo's homesick emissary:
 Not there on Avon, or on any stream

⁵ Famous Greek musician of the seventh century B.C. who is said to have developed the lyre

⁶ "And though thou hadst small Latin, and less Greek," Jonson in "To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author, Mr William Shakespeare."

Where Naiads 7 and their white arms are no more,
 Shall he find home again It's all too bad
 But there's a comfort, for he'll have that House 8—
 The best you ever saw, and he'll be there
 Anon, as you're an Alderman Good God!
 He makes me lie awake o' nights and laugh 60

And you have known him from his origin,
 You tell me, and a most uncommon which
 He must have been to the few seeing ones—
 A trifle terrifying, I dare say,
 Discovering a world with his man's eyes,
 Quite as another lad might see some finches,
 If he looked hard and had an eye for nature.
 But this one had his eyes and their foretelling,
 And he had you to fare with, and what else?
 He must have had a father and a mother— 70
 In fact I've heard him say so—and a dog,
 As a boy should, I venture, and the dog,
 Most likely, was the only man who knew him.
 A dog, for all I know, is what he needs
 As much as anything right here to-day,
 To counsel him about his disillusiones,
 Old aches, and parturitions of what's coming,—
 A dog of orders, an emeritus,
 To wag his tail at him when he comes home,
 And then to put his paws up on his knees 80
 And say, "For God's sake, what's it all about?"

I don't know whether he needs a dog or not—
 Or what he needs. I tell him he needs Greek,
 I'll talk of rules and Aristotle with him,
 And if his tongue's at home he'll say to that,
 "I have your word that Aristotle knows,
 And you mine that I don't know Aristotle."
 He's all at odds with all the unities,⁹
 And what's yet worse, it doesn't seem to matter;
 He treads along through Time's old wilderness 90
 As if the tramp of all the centuries
 Had left no roads—and there are none, for him;
 He doesn't see them, even with those eyes,—
 And that's a pity, or I say it is.
 Accordingly we have him as we have him—
 Going his way, the way that he goes best,
 A pleasant animal with no great noise
 Or nonsense anywhere to set him off—
 Save only divers and inclement devils

⁷ Water nymphs

⁸ In 1597 Shakespeare bought New Place, the largest house in Stratford

⁹ The "classical unities" of time, place, and action.

Have made of late his heart their dwelling place. 100
 A flame half ready to fly out sometimes
 At some annoyance may be fanned up in him,
 But soon it falls, and when it falls goes out;
 He knows how little room there is in there
 For crude and futile animosities,
 And how much for the joy of being whole,
 And how much for long sorrow and old pain.
 On our side there are some who may be given
 To grow old wondering what he thinks of us
 And some above us, who are, in his eyes, 110
 Above himself,—and that's quite right and
 English.

Yet here we smile, or disappoint the gods
 Who made it so: the gods have always eyes
 To see men scratch; and they see one down here
 Who itches, manor-bitten to the bone,
 Albeit he knows himself—yes, yes, he knows—
 The lord of more than England and of more
 Than all the seas of England in all time
 Shall ever wash. D'ye wonder that I laugh?
 He sees me, and he doesn't seem to care; 120
 And why the devil should he? I can't tell you.

I'll meet him out alone of a bright Sunday,
 Trim, rather spruce, and quite the gentleman.
 "What ho, my lord!" say I. He doesn't hear me;
 Wherefore I have to pause and look at him.
 He's not enormous, but one looks at him.
 A little on the round if you insist,
 For now, God save the mark, he's growing old;
 He's five and forty, and to hear him talk
 These days you'd call him eighty; then you'd add 130
 More years to that. He's old enough to be
 The father of a world, and so he is.
 "Ben, you're a scholar, what's the time of day?"
 Says he; and there shines out of him again
 An aged light that has no age or station—
 The mystery that's his—a mischievous
 Half-mad serenity that laughs at fame
 For being won so easy, and at friends
 Who laugh at him for what he wants the most,
 And for his dukedom¹⁰ down in Warwickshire;— 140
 By which you see we're all a little jealous. . . .
 Poor Greene! ¹¹ I fear the color of his name

¹⁰ Shakespeare's buying a coat of arms for his father may have seemed to indicate aristocratic ambitions.

¹¹ Robert Green, an unsuccessful playwright, made a jealous attack on Shakespeare (whom he called "Shake-scene") in *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit Bought with a Million of Repentance* (1592).

Was even as that of his ascending soul;
 And he was one where there are many others,—
 Some scrivening to the end against their fate,
 Their puppets all in ink and all to die there;
 And some with hands that once would shade an
 eye
 That scanned Euripides and Æschylus
 Will reach by this time for a pot-house mop
 To slush their first and last of royalties. 150
 Poor devils! and they all play to his hand;
 For so it was in Athens and old Rome.
 But that's not here or there; I've wandered off.
 Greene does it, or I'm careful. Where's that boy?

Yes, he'll go back to Stratford. And we'll miss him?
 Dear sir, there'll be no London here without him.
 We'll all be riding, one of these fine days,
 Down there to see him—and his wife won't like us;
 And then we'll think of what he never said
 Of women—which, if taken all in all 160
 With what he did say, would buy many horses.
 Though nowadays he's not so much for women:
 "So few of them," he says, "are worth the
 guessing."

But there's a worm at work when he says that,
 And while he says it one feels in the air
 A deal of circumambient hocus-pocus.
 They've had him dancing till his toes were tender,
 And he can feel 'em now, come chilly rains.
 There's no long cry for going into it,
 However, and we don't know much about it. 170
 But you in Stratford, like most here in London,
 Have more now in the *Sonnets* than you paid for;
 He's put one there with all her poison on,
 To make a singing fiction of a shadow
 That's in his life a fact, and always will be.
 But she's no care of ours, though Time, I fear,
 Will have a more reverberant ado
 About her than about another one
 Who seems to have decoyed him, married him,
 And sent him scuttling on his way to London,— 180
 With much already learned, and more to learn,
 And more to follow. Lord! how I see him now,
 Pretending, maybe trying, to be like us.
 Whatever he may have meant, we never had him;
 He failed us, or escaped, or what you will,—
 And there was that about him (God knows
 what,—
 We'd flayed another had he tried it on us)

That made as many of us as had wits
 More fond of all his easy distances
 Than one another's noise and clap-your-shoulder 190
 But think you not, my friend, he'd never talk!
 Talk? He was eldritch at it, and we listened—
 Thereby acquiring much we knew before
 About ourselves, and hitherto had held
 Ineluctant, or not prime to the purpose
 And there were some, of course, and there be now,
 Disordered and reduced amazingly
 To resignation by the mystic seal
 Of young finality the gods had laid
 On everything that made him a young demon, 200
 And one or two shot looks at him already
 As he had been their executioner,
 And once or twice he was, not knowing it,—
 Or knowing, being sorry for poor clay
 And saying nothing . . . Yet, for all his engines,
 You'll meet a thousand of an afternoon
 Who strut and sun themselves and see around
 'em

A world made out of more that has a reason
 Than his, I swear, that he sees here to-day;
 Though he may scarcely give a Fool an exit 210
 But we mark how he sees in everything
 A law that, given we flout it once too often,
 Brings fire and iron down on our naked heads.
 To me it looks as if the power that made him,
 For fear of giving all things to one creature,
 Left out the first,—faith, innocence, illusion,
 Whatever 'tis that keeps us out o' Bedlam,—¹²
 And thereby, for his too consuming vision,
 Empowered him out of nature, though to see
 him,
 You'd never guess what's going on inside him. 220
 He'll break out some day like a keg of ale
 With too much independent frenzy in it;
 And all for cellaring what he knows won't keep,
 And what he'd best forget—but that he can't.
 You'll have it, and have more than I'm fore-
 telling,
 And there'll be such a roaring at the Globe ¹³
 As never stunned the bleeding gladiators.
 He'll have to change the color of its hair
 A bit, for now he calls it Cleopatra.
 Black hair would never do for Cleopatra 230

¹² Corruption of Bethlehem Hospital, an asylum for the insane

¹³ Shakespeare's plays were produced at the Globe Theatre, which the dramatist partly owned

But you and I are not yet two old women,
 And you're a man of office What he does
 Is more to you than how it is he does it,—
 And that's what the Lord God has never told
 him
 They work together, and the Devil helps 'em.
 They do it of a morning, or if not,
 They do it of a night, in which event
 He's peevish of a morning He seems old,
 He's not the proper stomach or the sleep—
 And they're two sovian agents to conserve him 240
 Against the fiery art that has no mercy
 But what's in that prodigious grand new House.
 I gather something happening in his boyhood
 Fulfilled him with a boy's determination
 To make all Stratford 'ware of him Well, well,
 I hope at last he'll have his joy of it,
 And all his pigs and sheep and bellowing beeves,
 And frogs and owls and unicorns, moreover,
 Be less than hell to his attendant cars
 Oh, past a doubt we'll all go down to see him 250

He may be wise. With London two days off,
 Down there some wind of heaven may yet revive
 him,
 But there's no quickening breath from anywhere
 Shall make of him again the poised young faun
 From Warwickshue, who'd made, it seems,
 already
 A legend of himself before I came
 To blink before the last of his first lightning
 Whatever there be, there'll be no more of that,
 The coming on of his old monster Time
 Has made him a still man; and he has dreams 260
 Were fair to think on once, and all found hollow
 He knows how much of what men paint them-
 selves
 Would bluster in the light of what they are,
 He sees how much of what was great now shares
 An eminence transformed and ordinary;
 He knows too much of what the world has
 hushed
 In others, to be loud now for himself;
 He knows now at what height low enemies
 May reach his heart, and high friends let him
 fall;
 But what not even such as he may know 270
 Bedevils him the worst his lark may sing
 At heaven's gate how he will, and for as long

As joy may listen, but *he* sees no gate,
 Save one whereat the spent clay waits a little
 Before the churchyard has it, and the worm.
 Not long ago, late in an afternoon,
 I came on him unseen down Lambeth way,
 And on my life I was afraid of him:
 He gloomed and mumbled like a soul from
 Tophet,
 His hands behind him and his head bent solemn. 280
 "What is it now," said I,—“another woman?”
 That made him sorry for me, and he smiled.
 "No, Ben," he mused; "it's Nothing. It's all
 Nothing.
 We come, we go; and when we're done, we're
 done.
 Spiders and flies—we're mostly one or t'other—
 We come, we go; and when we're done, we're
 done."
 "By God, you sing that song as if you knew it!"
 Said I, by way of cheering him; "what ails ye?"
 "I think I must have come down here to think,"
 Says he to that, and pulls his little beard; 290
 "Your fly will serve as well as anybody,
 And what's his hour? He flies, and flies, and flies,
 And in his fly's mind has a brave appearance;
 And then your spider gets him in her net,
 And eats him out, and hangs him up to dry.
 That's Nature, the kind mother of us all.
 And then your slattern housemaid swings her
 broom,
 And where's your spider? And that's Nature, also.
 It's Nature, and it's Nothing. It's all Nothing.
 It's all a world where bugs and emperors 300
 Go singularly back to the same dust,
 Each in his time; and the old, ordered stars
 That sang together, Ben, will sing the same
 Old stave to-morrow."

When he talks like that,
 There's nothing for a human man to do
 But lead him to some grateful nook like this
 Where we be now, and there to make him drink.
 He'll drink, for love of me, and then be sick;
 A sad sign always in a man of parts,
 And always very ominous. The great 310
 Should be as large in liquor as in love,—
 And our great friend is not so large in either:
 One disaffects him, and the other fails him;
 Whatso he drinks that has an antic in it,

He's wondering what's to pay in his insides;
 And while his eyes are on the Cyprian ¹⁴
 He's fribbling all the time with that damned
 House.

We laugh here at his thrift, but after all
 It may be thrift that saves him from the devil;
 God gave it, anyhow,—and we'll suppose 320
 He knew the compound of his handiwork.
 To-day the clouds are with him, but anon
 He'll out of 'em enough to shake the tree
 Of life itself and bring down fruit unheard-of,—
 And, throwing in the bruised and whole together,
 Prepare a wine to make us drunk with wonder;
 And if he live, there'll be a sunset spell
 Thrown over him as over a glassed lake
 That yesterday was all a black wild water.

God send he live to give us, if no more, 330
 What now's a-rampage in him, and exhibit,
 With a decent half-allegiance to the ages
 An earnest of at least a casual eye
 Turned once on what he owes to Gutenberg,
 And to the fealty of more centuries
 Than are as yet a picture in our vision.
 "There's time enough,—I'll do it when I'm old,
 And we're immortal men," he says to that;
 And then he says to me, "Ben, what's 'immortal'?"
 Think you by any force of ordination 340
 It may be nothing of a sort more noisy
 Than a small oblivion of component ashes
 That of a dream-addicted world was once
 A moving atomy much like your friend here?"
 Nothing will help that man. To make him laugh,
 I said then he was a mad mountebank,—
 And by the Lord I nearer made him cry.
 I could have eat an eft ¹⁵ then, on my knees,
 Tail, claws, and all of him; for I had stung
 The king of men, who had no sting for me, 350
 And I had hurt him in his memories;
 And I say now, as I shall say again,
 I love the man this side idolatry.¹⁶

He'll do it when he's old, he says. I wonder.
 He may not be so ancient as all that.
 For such as he, the thing that is to do

¹⁴ Cyprian Aphrodite—Shakespeare's sonnets indicate that he may have dissipated with women. ("Cyprian" is a synonym for prostitute.)

¹⁵ Newt or lizard.

¹⁶ In *Discoveries* Ben Jonson wrote of Shakespeare, "I loved the man, and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry . . ."

Will do itself,—but there's a reckoning,
 The sessions that are now too much his own,
 The roiling inward of a stilled outside,
 The churning out of all those blood-fed lines, 360
 The nights of many schemes and little sleep,
 The full brain hammered hot with too much
 thinking,

The vexed heart over-worn with too much
 aching,—

This weary jangling of conjoined affairs
 Made out of elements that have no end,
 And all confused at once, I understand,
 Is not what makes a man to live forever
 O no, not now! He'll not be going now
 There'll be time yet for God knows what
 explosions

Before he goes He'll stay awhile Just wait 370
 Just wait a year or two for Cleopatra,
 For she's to be a balsam and a comfort,
 And that's not all a jape of mine now, either
 For granted once the old way of Apollo
 Sings in a man, he may then, if he's able,
 Strike unafraid whatever stings he will
 Upon the last and wildest of new lyrics,
 Not out of his new magic, though it hymn
 The shrieks of dungeoned hell, shall he create
 A madness or a gloom to shut quite out 380
 A cleaving daylight, and a last great calm
 Triumphant over shipwreck and all storms
 He might have given Aristotle creeps,
 But surely would have given him his *katharsis* 17

He'll not be going yet. There's too much yet
 Unsung within the man But when he goes,
 I'd stake ye coin o' the realm his only care
 For a phantom world he sounded and found
 wanting

Will be a portion here, a portion there,
 Of this or that thing or some other thing 390
 That has a patent and intrinsic
 Equivalence in those egregious shillings.
 And yet he knows, God help him! Tell me, now,
 If ever there was anything let loose
 On earth by gods or devils heretofore
 Like this mad, careful, proud, indifferent
 Shakespeare!

Where was it, if it ever was? By heaven,

'Twas never yet in Rhodes or Pergamon—
 In Thebes or Nineveh, a thing like this!
 No thing like this was ever out of England, 400
 And that he knows I wonder if he cares
 Perhaps he does O Lord, that House in
 Stratford!

1916

*The Man Against the Sky*¹⁸

Between me and the sunset, like a dome
 Against the glory of a world on fire,
 Now burned a sudden hill,
 Bleak, round, and high, by flame-lit height made
 higher,

With nothing on it for the flame to kill
 Save one who moved and was alone up there
 To loom before the chaos and the glare
 As if he were the last god going home
 Unto his last desire

Dark, marvelous, and inscrutable he moved on 10
 Till down the fiery distance he was gone,
 Like one of those eternal, remote things
 That range across a man's imaginings
 When a sure music fills him and he knows
 What he may say thereafter to few men,—
 The touch of ages having wrought
 An echo and a glimpse of what he thought
 A phantom or a legend until then,
 For whether lighted over ways that save, 20
 Or lured from all repose,
 If he go on too far to find a grave,
 Mostly alone he goes.

Even he, who stood where I had found him,
 On high with fire all round him,
 Who moved along the molten west,
 And over the round hill's crest
 That seemed half ready with him to go down,
 Flame-bitten and flame-cleft,
 As if there were to be no last thing left
 Of a nameless unimaginable town,— 30
 Even he who climbed and vanished may have
 taken

Down to the perils of a depth not known,
 From death defended though by men forsaken,

¹⁷ Aristotle in his *Poetics* says that the end of tragedy should be a catharsis of the emotions

¹⁸ From E. A. Robinson. *The Man Against the Sky* Copyright 1916 by The Macmillan Company. This is the title poem in the collection. Also E. A. Robinson *Collected Poems* Copyright 1921 by The Macmillan Company

The bread that every man must eat alone;
 He may have walked while others hardly dared
 Look on to see him stand where many fell;
 And upward out of that, as out of hell,
 He may have sung and striven
 To mount where more of him shall yet be given,
 Bereft of all retreat,
 To sevenfold heat,—
 As on a day when three in Dura shared
 The furnace, and were spared
 For glory by that king of Babylon
 Who made himself so great that God, who heard,
 Covered him with long feathers, like a bird.¹⁹

Again, he may have gone down easily,
 By comfortable altitudes, and found,
 As always, underneath him solid ground
 Whereon to be sufficient and to stand
 Possessed already of the promised land,
 Far stretched and fair to see:
 A good sight, verily,
 And one to make the eyes of her who bore him
 Shine glad with hidden tears.
 Why question of his case of who before him,
 In one place or another where they left
 Their names as far behind them as their bones,
 And yet by dint of slaughter toil and theft,
 And shrewdly sharpened stones,
 Carved hard the way for his ascendancy
 Through deserts of lost years?
 Why trouble him now who sees and hears
 No more than what his innocence requires,
 And therefore to no other height aspires
 Than one at which he neither quails nor tires?
 He may do more by seeing what he sees
 Than others eager for iniquities;
 He may, by seeing all things for the best,
 Incite futurity to do the rest.

Or with an even likelihood,
 He may have met with atrabilious eyes
 The fires of time on equal terms and passed
 Indifferently down, until at last
 His only kind of grandeur would have been,
 Apparently, in being seen.
 He may have had for evil or for good
 No argument; he may have had no care
 For what without himself went anywhere
 To failure or to glory, and least of all

¹⁹ Cf. Daniel iii:19-29.

For such a stale, flamboyant miracle;
 He may have been the prophet of an art
 Immovable to old idolatries;
 He may have been a player without a part,
 Annoyed that even the sun should have the skies
 For such a flaming way to advertise;
 He may have been a painter sick at heart
 With Nature's toiling for a new surprise;
 He may have been a cynic, who now, for all
 Of anything divine that his effete
 Negation may have tasted,
 Saw truth in his own image, rather small,
 Forbore to fever the ephemeral,
 Found any barren height a good retreat
 From any swarming street,
 And in the sun saw power superbly wasted;
 And when the primitive old-fashioned stars
 Came out again to shine on joys and wars
 More primitive, and all arrayed for doom,
 He may have proved a world a sorry thing
 In his imagining,
 And life a lighted highway to the tomb.

Or, mounting with infirm unscarching tread,
 His hopes to chaos led,
 He may have stumbled up there from the past,
 And with an aching strangeness viewed the last
 Abysmal conflagration of his dreams,—
 A flame where nothing seems
 To burn but flame itself, by nothing fed;
 And while it all went out,
 Not even the faint anodyne of doubt
 May then have eased a painful going down
 From pictured heights of power and lost renown,
 Revealed at length to his outlived endeavor
 Remote and unapproachable forever;
 And at his heart there may have gnawed
 Sick memories of a dead faith foiled and flawed
 And long dishonored by the living death
 Assigned alike by chance
 To brutes and hierophants;
 And anguish fallen on those he loved around him
 May once have dealt the last blow to confound
 him,
 And so have left him as death leaves a child,
 Who sees it all too near;
 And he who knows no young way to forget
 May struggle to the tomb unreconciled.
 Whatever suns may rise or set

There may be nothing kinder for him here
 Than shafts and agonies,
 And under these
 He may cry out and stay on horribly;
 Or, seeing in death too small a thing to fear,
 He may go forward like a stoic Roman
 Where pangs and terrors in his pathway lie,—
 Or, seizing the swift logic of a woman,
 Curse God and die.

Or maybe there, like many another one
 Who might have stood aloft and looked ahead,
 Black-drawn against wild red,
 He may have built, unawed by fiery gules
 That in him no commotion stirred,
 A living reason out of molecules
 Why molecules occurred,
 And one for smiling when he might have sighed
 Had he seen far enough,
 And in the same inevitable stuff
 Discovered an odd reason too for pride
 In being what he must have been by laws
 Infrangible and for no kind of cause
 Deterred by no confusion or surprise
 He may have seen with his mechanic eyes
 A world without a meaning, and had room,
 Alone amid magnificence and doom,
 To build himself an airy monument
 That should, or fail him in his vague intent,
 Outlast an accidental universe—
 To call it nothing worse—
 Or, by the burrowing guile
 Of Time disintegrated and effaced,
 Like once-remembered mighty trees go down
 To ruin, of which by man may now be traced
 No part sufficient even to be rotten,
 And in the book of things that are forgotten
 Is entered as a thing not quite worth while.
 He may have been so great
 That satraps would have shivered at his frown,
 And all he prized alive may rule a state
 No larger than a grave that holds a clown;
 He may have been a master of his fate,
 And of his atoms,—ready as another
 In his emergence to exonerate
 His father and his mother;
 He may have been a captain of a host,
 Self-eloquent and ripe for prodigies,

Doomed here to swell by dangerous degrees,
 And then give up the ghost
 130 Nahum's²⁰ great grasshoppers were such as these,
 Sun-scattered and soon lost.

Whatever the dark road he may have taken,
 This man who stood on high
 And faced alone the sky,
 Whatever drove or lured or guided him,—
 A vision answering a faith unshaken,
 An easy trust assumed of easy trials,
 A sick negation born of weak denials,
 A crazed abhorrence of an old condition,
 140 A blind attendance on a brief ambition,—
 Whatever stayed him or decided him,
 His way was even as ours,
 And we, with all our wounds and all our powers,
 190 Must each await alone at his own height
 Another darkness or another light,
 And there, of our poor self dominion left,
 If inference and reason shun
 Hell, Heaven, and Oblivion,
 May thwarted will (perforce precarious,
 150 But for our conservation better thus)
 Have no misgiving left
 Of doing yet what here we leave undone?
 Or if unto the last of these we cleave,
 200 Believing or protesting we believe
 In such an idle and ephemeral
 Florescence of the diabolical,—
 If, loomed of two fond old enormities,
 Our being had no onward auguries,
 What then were this great love of ours to say
 For launching other lives to voyage again
 A little farther into time and pain,
 A little faster in a futile chase
 For a kingdom and a power and a Race
 210 That would have still in sight
 A manifest end of ashes and eternal night?
 Is this the music of the toys we shake
 So loud,—as if there might be no mistake
 Somewhere in our indomitable will?
 Are we no greater than the noise we make
 170 Along one blind atomic pilgrimage
 Whereon by crass chance billeted we go
 Because our brains and bones and cartilage
 Will have it so?

²⁰ Cf. Nahum iii.17

If this we say, then let us all be still
About our share in it, and live and die
More quietly thereby.

Where was he going, this man against the sky?
You know not, nor do I.

But this we know, if we know anything:
That we may laugh and fight and sing
And of our transience here make offering
To an orient Word that will not be erased,
Or, save in incommunicable gleams 230
Too permanent for dreams,
Be found or known.
No tonic and ambitious irritant
Of increase or of want
Has made an otherwise insensate waste
Of ages overthrown
A ruthless, veiled, implacable foretaste
Of other ages that are still to be
Depleted and rewarded variously
Because a few, by fate's economy, 240
Shall seem to move the world the way it goes;
No soft evangel of equality,
Safe-cradled in a communal repose
That huddles into death and may at last
Be covered well with equatorial snows—
And all for what, the devil only knows—
Will aggregate an inkling to confirm
The credit of a sage or of a worm,
Or tell us why one man in five
Should have a care to stay alive 250
While in his heart he feels no violence
Laid on his humor and intelligence
When infant Science makes a pleasant face
And waves again that hollow toy, the Race;
No planetary trap where souls are wrought
For nothing but the sake of being caught
And sent again to nothing will attune
Itself to any key of any reason
Why man should hunger through another season
To find out why 'twere better late than soon 260
To go away and let the sun and moon
And all the silly stars illuminate
A place for creeping things,
And those that root and trumpet and have wings,
And herd and ruminant,
Or dive and flash and poise in rivers and seas,
Or by their loyal tails in lofty trees

Hang screeching lewd victorious derision
Of man's immortal vision.
Shall we, because Eternity records 270
Too vast an answer for the time-born words
We spell, whereof so many are dead that once
In our capricious lexicons
Were so alive and final, hear no more
The Word itself, the living word
That none alive has ever heard
Or ever spelt,
And few have ever felt
Without the fears and old surrenderings
And terrors that began 280
When Death let fall a feather from his wings
And humbled the first man?
Because the weight of our humility,
Wherefrom we gain
A little wisdom and much pain,
Falls here too sore and there too tedious,
Are we in anguish or complacency,
Not looking far enough ahead 290
To see by what mad couriers we are led
Along the roads of the ridiculous,
To pity ourselves and laugh at faith
And while we curse life bear it?
And if we see the soul's dead end in death,
Are we to fear it?
What folly is here that has not yet a name
Unless we say outright that we are liars?
What have we seen beyond our sunset fires
That lights again the way by which we came? 300
Why pay we such a price, and one we give
So clamoringly, for each racked empty day
That leads one more last human hope away,
As quiet fiends would lead past our crazed eyes
Our children to an unseen sacrifice?
If after all that we have lived and thought,
All comes to Nought,—
If there be nothing after Now,
And we be nothing anyhow,
And we know that,—why live?
'Twere sure but weaklings' vain distress
To suffer dungeons where so many doors 310
Will open on the cold eternal shores
That look sheer down
To the dark tideless floods of Nothingness
Where all who know may drown.

FROM

The Children of the Night

(1897)

Richard Cory

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked,
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace: 10
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head. 1897

Calvary

Friendless and faint, with martyred steps and
slow,
Faint for the flesh, but for the spirit free,
Stung by the mob that came to see the show,
The Master toiled along to Calvary;
We gibed him, as he went, with houndish glee,
Till his dimmed eyes for us did overflow,
We cursed his vengeless hands thence wretchedly,—
And this was nineteen hundred years ago.

But after nineteen hundred years the shame
Still clings, and we have not made good the loss 10
That outraged faith has entered in his name
Ah, when shall come love's courage to be strong!
Tell me, O Lord—tell me, O Lord, how long
Are we to keep Christ writhing on the cross!

1897

*Zola*²¹

Because he puts the compromising chart
Of hell before your eyes, you are afraid;

²¹ Published in *The Torrent and the Night Before* (1896),
reprinted in *The Children of the Night* (1897)

Because he counts the price that you have paid
For innocence, and counts it from the start,
You loathe him. But he sees the human heart
Of God meanwhile, and in His hand was weighed
Your squamish and emasculate crusade
Against the grim dominion of his art.

Never until we conquer the uncouth
Connivings of our shamed indifference 10
(We call it Christian faith) are we to scan
The racked and shrieking hideousness of Truth
To find, in hate's polluted self-defence
Throbbing, the pulse, the divine heart of man

1896

*George Crabbe*²²

Give him the darkest inch your shelf allows,
Hide him in lonely garrets, if you will,—
But his hard, human pulse is throbbing still
With the sure strength that fearless truth endows.
In spite of all fine science disavows,
Of his plain excellence and stubborn skill
There yet remains what fashion cannot kill,
Though years have thinned the laurel from his
brows.

Whether or not we read him, we can feel
From time to time the vigor of his name 10
Against us like a finger for the shame
And emptiness of what our souls reveal
In books that are as altars where we kneel
To consecrate the flicker, not the flame.

1896

*Credo*²³

I cannot find my way: there is no star
In all the shrouded heavens anywhere;
And there is not a whisper in the air
Of any living voice but one so far
That I can hear it only as a bar

²² Published in *The Torrent and the Night Before* (1896),
reprinted in *The Children of the Night* (1897).

²³ Published in *The Torrent and the Night Before* (1896),
reprinted in *The Children of the Night* (1897).

Of lost, imperial music, played when fair
And angel fingers wove, and unaware,
Dead leaves to garlands where no roses are.

No, there is not a glimmer, nor a call,
For one that welcomes, welcomes when he fears, 10

The black and awful chaos of the night;
For through it all—above, beyond it all—
I know the far-sent message of the years,
I feel the coming glory of the Light.

1896

FROM

The Town Down the River

(1910)

Doctor of Billiards ²⁴

Of all among the fallen from on high,
We count you last and leave you to regain
Your born dominion of a life made vain
By three spheres of insidious ivory.
You dwindle to the lesser tragedy—
Content, you say. We call, but you remain.
Nothing alive gone wrong could be so plain,
Or quite so blasted with absurdity.

You click away the kingdom that is yours,
And you click off your crown for cap and bells; 10
You smile, who are still master of the feast,
And for your smile we credit you the least;
But when your false, unhallowed laugh occurs.
We seem to think there may be something else.
1910

How Annandale Went Out ²⁵

"They called it Annandale—and I was there
To flourish, to find words, and to attend:
Liar, physician, hypocrite, and friend,
I watched him; and the sight was not so fair
As one or two that I have seen elsewhere:
An apparatus not for me to mend—
A wreck, with hell between him and the end,
Remained of Annandale; and I was there.

"I knew the ruin as I knew the man;
So put the two together, if you can, 10
Remembering the worst you know of me.
Now view yourself as I was, on the spot—
With a slight kind of engine. Do you see?

²⁴ Reprinted from *The Town Down the River* by Edwin Arlington Robinson; copyright 1910 by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938 by Ruth Niveson; used by permission of the publishers.

²⁵ Reprinted from *The Town Down the River* by Edwin Arlington Robinson; copyright 1910 by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938 by Ruth Niveson; used by permission of the publishers.

Like this . . . You wouldn't hang me? I thought
not." 1910

Alma Mater ²⁶

He knocked, and I beheld him at the door—
A vision for the gods to verify.
"What battered ancients is this," thought I,
"And when, if ever, did we meet before?"
But ask him as I might, I got no more
For answer than a moaning and a cry:
Too late to parley, but in time to die,
He staggered, and lay shapeless on the floor.

When had I known him? And what brought him
here?

Love, warning, malediction, hunger, fear? 10
Surely I never thwarted such as he?—
Again, what soiled obscurity was this:
Out of what scum, and up from what abyss,
Had they arrived—these rags of memory?

1910

Miniver Cheevy ²⁷

Miniver Cheevy, child of scorn,
Grew lean while he assailed the seasons;
He wept that he was ever born,
And he had reasons.

Miniver loved the days of old
When swords were bright and steeds were
prancing;
The vision of a warrior bold
Would set him dancing.

²⁶ Reprinted from *The Town Down the River* by Edwin Arlington Robinson; copyright 1910 by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938 by Ruth Niveson; used by permission of the publishers.

²⁷ Reprinted from *The Town Down the River* by Edwin Arlington Robinson; copyright 1910 by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938 by Ruth Niveson; used by permission of the publishers.

Miniver sighed for what was not,
 And dicamed, and rested from his labors, 10
 He dreamed of Thebes and Camelot,
 And Priam's neighbors

Miniver mourned the ripe renown
 That made so many a name so fragrant,
 He mourned Romance, now on the town,
 And Art, a vagrant

Miniver loved the Medici,
 Albeit he had never seen one,
 He would have sinned incessantly
 Could he have been one 20

Miniver cursed the commonplace
 And eyed a khaki suit with loathing,
 He missed the mediæval grace
 Of iron clothing

Miniver scorned the gold he sought,
 But sore annoyed was he without it,
 Miniver thought, and thought, and thought,
 And thought about it

Miniver Cheevy, born too late,
 Scratched his head and kept on thinking, 30
 Miniver coughed, and called it fate,
 And kept on drinking

1907, 1910

FROM

The Three Taverns

(1920)

*The Mill*²⁸

The miller's wife had waited long,
 The tea was cold, the fire was dead,
 And there might yet be nothing wrong
 In how he went and what he said
 "There are no millers any more,"
 Was all that she had heard him say,
 And he had lingered at the door
 So long that it seemed yesterday.

Sick with a fear that had no form
 She knew that she was there at last, 10
 And in the mill there was a warm
 And mealy fragrance of the past.
 What else there was would only seem
 To say again what he had meant;
 And what was hanging from a beam
 Would not have heeded where she went.

And if she thought it followed her,
 She may have reasoned in the dark
 That one way of the few there were
 Would hide her and would leave no mark: 20

Black water, smooth above the weir
 Like stary velvet in the night,
 Though ruffled once, would soon appear
 The same as ever to the sight

1919

*Demos*²⁹

I

All you that are enamored of my name
 And least intent on what most I require, 10
 Beware, for my design and your desire,
 Deplorably, are not as yet the same.

Beware, I say, the failure and the shame
 Of losing that for which you now aspire
 So blindly, and of hazarding entire
 The gift that I was bringing when I came.

Give as I will, I cannot give you sight
 Whereby to see that with you there are 10
 some
 To lead you, and be led. But they are dumb

²⁸ From E. A. Robinson *The Three Taverns*. Copyright 1920 by The Macmillan Company. Also E. A. Robinson, *Collected Poems*. Copyright 1921 by The Macmillan Company. Published in *The New Republic*, July 2, 1919, reprinted in *Anthology of Magazine Verse* (1919) and *The Three Taverns* (1920).

²⁹ From E. A. Robinson *The Three Taverns*. Copyright 1920 by The Macmillan Company. Also E. A. Robinson *Collected Poems*. Copyright 1921 by The Macmillan Company. Published in *North American Review*, January, 1919, reprinted in *Anthology of Magazine Verse* (1919) and *The Three Taverns* (1920).

FROM

North of Boston

(1914)

Mending Wall

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
 That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
 And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
 And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
 The work of hunters is another thing:
 I have come after them and made repair
 Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
 But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
 To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
 No one has seen them made or heard them made, 10
 But at spring mending-time we find them there.
 I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;
 And on a day we meet to walk the line
 And set the wall between us once again.
 We keep the wall between us as we go.
 To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
 And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
 We have to use a spell to make them balance:
 'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!' 20
 We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
 Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
 One on a side. It comes to little more:
 There where it is we do not need the wall:
 He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
 My apple trees will never get across
 And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
 He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'
 Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
 If I could put a notion in his head:
 'Why do they make good neighbours? Isn't it 30
 Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
 Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
 What I was walling in or walling out,
 And to whom I was like to give offence.
 Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
 That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
 But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
 He said it for himself. I see him there
 Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
 In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed. 40
 He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
 Not of woods only and the shade of trees.

He will not go behind his father's saying,
 And he likes having thought of it so well
 He says again, 'Good fences make good neigh-
 bours.' 1914

The Mountain

The mountain held the town as in a shadow.
 I saw so much before I slept there once:
 I noticed that I missed stars in the west,
 Where its black body cut into the sky.
 Near me it seemed: I felt it like a wall
 Behind which I was sheltered from a wind.
 And yet between the town and it I found,
 When I walked forth at dawn to see new things,
 Were fields, a river, and beyond, more fields.
 The river at the time was fallen away, 10
 And made a widespread brawl on cobble-stones;
 But the signs showed what it had done in spring:
 Good grass-land gullied out, and in the grass
 Ridges of sand, and driftwood stripped of bark.
 I crossed the river and swung round the mountain.
 And there I met a man who moved so slow
 With white-faced oxen in a heavy cart,
 It seemed no harm to stop him altogether.
 'What town is this?' I asked.

'This? Lunenburg.'

Then I was wrong: the town of my sojourn, 20
 Beyond the bridge, was not that of the mountain,
 But only felt at night its shadowy presence.
 'Where is your village? Very far from here?'
 'There is no village—only scattered farms.
 We were but sixty voters last election.
 We can't in nature grow to many more:
 That thing takes all the room!' He moved his goad.
 The mountain stood there to be pointed at.
 Pasture ran up the side a little way,
 And then there was a wall of trees with trunks; 30
 After that only tops of trees, and cliffs
 Imperfectly concealed among the leaves.
 A dry ravine emerged from under boughs
 Into the pasture.

'That looks like a path
Is that the way to reach the top from here?—
Not for this morning, but some other time
I must be getting back to breakfast now'

'I don't advise your trying from this side
There is no proper path, but those that *have*
Been up, I understand, have climbed from
Ladd's

That's five miles back You can't mistake the
place
They logged it there last winter some way up
I'd take you, but I'm bound the other way'

'You've never climbed it?'

'I've been on the sides,
Deer-hunting and trout-fishing There's a brook
That starts up on it somewhere—I've heard say
Right on the top, tip-top—a curious thing
But what would interest you about the brook,
It's always cold in summer, warm in winter
One of the great sights going is to see
It steam in winter like an ox's breath,
Until the bushes all along its banks
Are inch-deep with the frosty spines and bristles—
You know the kind 'Then let the sun shine on it!'

'There ought to be a view around the world
From such a mountain—if it isn't wooded
Clear to the top' I saw through leafy screens
Great granite terraces in sun and shadow,
Shelves one could rest a knee on getting up—
With depths behind him sheer a hundred feet,
Or turn and sit on and look out and down,
With little ferns in crevices at his elbow.

'As to that I can't say But there's the spring,
Right on the summit, almost like a fountain.
That ought to be worth seeing.'

'If it's there.

You never saw it?'

'I guess there's no doubt
About its being there. I never saw it.
It may not be right on the very top.
It wouldn't have to be a long way down
To have some head of water from above,
And a *good distance* down might not be noticed
By anyone who'd come a long way up.

One time I asked a fellow climbing it
To look and tell me later how it was'

'What did he say?'

'He said there was a lake
Somewhere in Ireland on a mountain top'

'But a lake's different What about the spring?'

He never got up high enough to see
That's why I don't advise you trying this side
He tried this side I've always meant to go
And look myself, but you know how it is
It doesn't seem so much to climb a mountain
You've worked around the foot of all your life
What would I do? Go in my overalls,
With a big stick, the same as when the cows
Haven't come down to the bars at milking time?
Or with a shotgun for a stray black bear?
'Twouldn't seem ical to climb for climbing it'

'I shouldn't climb it if I didn't want to—
Not for the sake of climbing What's its name?'

'We call it Hor I don't know if that's right'

'Can one walk around it? Would it be too far?'

'You can drive round and keep in Lunenburg,
But it's as much as ever you can do,
The boundary lines keep in so close to it
Hor is the township, and the township's Hor—
And a few houses sprinkled round the foot,
Like boulders broken off the upper cliff,
Rolled out a little farther than the rest.'

'Warm in December, cold in June, you say?'

'I don't suppose the water's changed at all.
You and I know enough to know it's warm
Compared with cold, and cold compared with
warm

But all the fun's in how you say a thing.'

'You've lived here all your life?'

'Ever since Hor
Was no bigger than a—' What, I did not hear
He drew the oxen toward him with light touches
Of his slim goad on nose and offside flank,
Gave them their marching orders and was moving.

FROM
Mountain Interval
 (1916)

Birches

When I see birches bend to left and right
 Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
 I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
 But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
 Ice-storms do that. Often you must have seen
 them

Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
 After a rain. They click upon themselves
 As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
 As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
 Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal
 shells

Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust—
 Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
 You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
 They are dragged to the withered bracken by the
 load,

And they seem not to break; though once they
 are bowed

So low for long, they never right themselves:
 You may see their trunks arching in the woods
 Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the
 ground

Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
 Before them over their heads to dry in the sun. 20
 But I was going to say when Truth broke in
 With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
 I should prefer to have some boy bend them
 As he went out and in to fetch the cows—
 Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
 Whose only play was what he found himself,
 Summer or winter, and could play alone.
 One by one he subdued his father's trees
 By riding them down over and over again
 Until he took the stiffness out of them,
 And not one but hung limp, not one was left
 For him to conquer. He learned all there was
 To learn about not launching out too soon
 And so not carrying the tree away
 Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
 To the top branches, climbing carefully
 With the same pains you use to fill a cup

Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
 Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
 Kicking his way down through the air to the
 ground. 40

So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
 And so I dream of going back to be.
 It's when I'm weary of considerations,
 And life is too much like a pathless wood
 Where your face burns and tickles with the cob-
 webs

Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
 From a twig's having lashed across it open.

I'd like to get away from earth awhile 10
 And then come back to it and begin over.
 May no fate willfully misunderstand me 50
 And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
 Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
 I don't know where it's likely to go better.

I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
 And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
 Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
 But dipped its top and set me down again.
 That would be good both going and coming back.
 One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

1916

Brown's Descent

OR

THE WILLY-NILLY SLIDE

Brown lived at such a lofty farm
 That everyone for miles could see
 His lantern when he did his chores
 In winter after half-past three.

And many must have seen him make 30
 His wild descent from there one night,
 'Cross lots, 'cross walls, 'cross everything,
 Describing rings of lantern light.

Between the house and barn the gale
 Got him by something he had on 10
 And blew him out on the icy crust
 That cased the world, and he was gone!

Walls were all burned, trees were few
 He saw no stay unless he stove
 A hole in somewhere with his heel.
 But though repeatedly he stove

And stamped and said things to himself,
 And sometimes something seemed to yield,
 He gained no foothold, but pursued
 His journey down from field to field

Sometimes he came with arms outspread
 Like wings, revolving in the scene
 Upon his longer axis, and
 With no small dignity of mien

Faster or slower as he chanced,
 Sitting or standing as he chose,
 According as he feared to risk
 His neck, or thought to spare his clothes,

He never let the lantern drop
 And some exclaimed who saw afar
 The figures he described with it,
 'I wonder what those signals are

Brown makes at such an hour of night!
 He's celebrating something strange
 I wonder if he's sold his farm,
 Or been made Master of the Grange.'

He reeled, he lurched, he bobbed, he checked;
 He fell and made the lantern rattle
 (But saved the light from going out.)
 So half-way down he fought the battle,

Incredulous of his own bad luck.
 And then becoming reconciled
 To everything, he gave it up
 And came down like a coasting child.

'Well—I—be—' that was all he said,
 As standing in the river road,
 He looked back up the slippery slope
 (Two miles it was) to his abode.

Sometimes as an authority
 On motor-cars, I'm asked if I
 Should say our stock was petered out,
 And this is my sincere reply

Yankees are what they always were
 Don't think Brown ever gave up hope
 Of getting home again because
 He couldn't climb that slippery slope;

Or even thought of standing there
 Until the January thaw
 Should take the polish off the crust
 He bowed with grace to natural law,

And then went round it on his feet,
 After the manner of our stock;
 Not much concerned for those to whom,
 At that particular time o'clock,

It must have looked as if the course
 He steered was really straight away
 From that which he was headed for—
 Not much concerned for them, I say;

No more so than became a man—
 And politician at odd seasons.
 I've kept Brown standing in the cold
 While I invested him with reasons,

But now he snapped his eyes three times;
 Then shook his lantern, saying, 'He's
 'Bout out!' and took the long way home
 By road, a matter of several miles.

1916

FROM

New Hampshire

(1923)

Paul's Wife

To drive Paul out of any lumber camp
 All that was needed was to say to him,
 'How is the wife, Paul?'—and he'd disappear.
 Some said it was because he had no wife,

And hated to be twitted on the subject.
 Others because he'd come within a day
 Or so of having one, and then been jilted.
 Others because he'd had one once, a good one,
 Who'd run away with some one else and left him.
 And others still because he had one now

10

He only had to be reminded of,—
 He was all duty to her in a minute:
 He had to run right off to look her up,
 As if to say, 'That's so, how is my wife?
 I hope she isn't getting into mischief.'
 No one was anxious to get rid of Paul.
 He'd been the hero of the mountain camps
 Ever since, just to show them, he had slipped
 The bark of a whole tamarack off whole,
 As clean as boys do off a willow twig
 To make a willow whistle on a Sunday
 In April by subsiding meadow brooks.
 They seemed to ask him just to see him go,
 'How is the wife, Paul?' and he always went.
 He never stopped to murder anyone
 Who asked the question. He just disappeared—
 Nobody knew in what direction,
 Although it wasn't usually long
 Before they heard of him in some new camp,
 The same Paul at the same old feats of logging.
 The question everywhere was why should Paul
 Object to being asked a civil question—
 A man you could say almost anything to
 Short of a fighting word. You have the answers.
 And there was one more not so fair to Paul:
 That Paul had married a wife not his equal.
 Paul was ashamed of her. To match a hero,
 She would have had to be a heroine;
 Instead of which she was some half-breed squaw.
 But if the story Murphy told was true,
 She wasn't anything to be ashamed of.

You know Paul could do wonders. Everyone's
 Heard how he thrashed the horses on a load
 That wouldn't budge until they simply stretched
 Their rawhide harness from the load to camp.
 Paul told the boss the load would be all right,
 'The sun will bring your load in'—and it did—
 By shrinking the rawhide to natural length.
 That's what is called a stretcher. But I guess
 The one about his jumping so's to land
 With both his feet at once against the ceiling,
 And then land safely right side up again,
 Back on the floor, is fact or pretty near fact.
 Well this is such a yarn. Paul sawed his wife
 Out of a white-pine log. Murphy was there,
 And, as you might say, saw the lady born.
 Paul worked at anything in lumbering.
 He'd been hard at it taking boards away

For—I forget—the last ambitious sawyer
 To want to find out if he couldn't pile 60
 The lumber on Paul till Paul begged for mercy.
 They'd sliced the first slab off a big butt log,
 And the sawyer had slammed the carriage back
 To slam end on again against the saw teeth.
 To judge them by the way they caught themselves
 When they saw what had happened to the log,
 They must have had a guilty expectation
 20 Something was going to go with their slambanging.
 Something had left a broad black streak of grease
 On the new wood the whole length of the log 70
 Except, perhaps, a foot at either end.
 But when Paul put his finger in the grease,
 It wasn't grease at all, but a long slot.
 The log was hollow. They were sawing pine.
 'First time I ever saw a hollow pine.
 That comes of having Paul around the place.
 Take it to hell for me,' the sawyer said.
 30 Everyone had to have a look at it,
 And tell Paul what he ought to do about it.
 (They treated it as his.) 'You take a jack-knife, 80
 And spread the opening, and you've got a dug-
 out
 All dug to go a-fishing in.' To Paul
 The hollow looked too sound and clean and empty
 Ever to have housed birds or beasts or bees.
 There was no entrance for them to get in by.
 It looked to him like some new kind of hollow
 40 He thought he'd *better* take his jack-knife to.
 So after work that evening he came back
 And let enough light into it by cutting
 To see if it was empty. He made out in there 90
 A slender length of pith, or was it pith?
 It might have been the skin a snake had cast
 And left stood up on end inside the tree
 The hundred years the tree must have been
 growing.
 More cutting and he had this in both hands,
 And, looking from it to the pond near by,
 50 Paul wondered how it would respond to water.
 Not a breeze stirred, but just the breath of air
 He made in walking slowly to the beach
 Blew it once off his hands and almost broke it. 100
 He laid it at the edge where it could drink.
 At the first drink it rustled and grew limp.
 At the next drink it grew invisible.
 Paul dragged the shallows for it with his fingers,
 And thought it must have melted. It was gone.

And then beyond the open water, dim with
midges,
Where the log drive lay pressed against the boom,
It slowly rose a person, rose a girl,
Her wet hair heavy on her like a helmet,
Who, leaning on a log looked back at Paul 110
And that made Paul in turn look back
To see if it was anyone behind him
'That she was looking at instead of him
Murphy had been there watching all the time,
But from a shed where neither of them could
see him

There was a moment of suspense in birth
When the girl seemed too water-logged to live,
Before she caught her first breath with a gasp
And laughed. Then she climbed slowly to her
feet,
And walked off talking to herself or Paul 120
Across the logs like backs of alligators,
Paul taking after her around the pond

Next evening Murphy and some other fellows
Got drunk, and tracked the pair up Catamount,
From the bare top of which there is a view
To other hills across a kettle valley.
And there, well after dark, let Murphy tell it,
They saw Paul and his creature keeping house
It was the only glimpse that anyone
Has had of Paul and her since Murphy saw them 130
Falling in love across the twilight mill-pond
More than a mile across the wilderness
They sat together half-way up a cliff
In a small niche let into it, the girl
Brightly, as if a star played on the place,
Paul darkly, like her shadow. All the light
Was from the girl herself, though, not from a
star,

As was apparent from what happened next.
All those great ruffians put their throats
together,
And let out a loud yell, and threw a bottle, 140
As a brute tribute of respect to beauty
Of course the bottle fell short by a mile,
But the shout reached the girl and put her light
out.

She went out like a firefly, and that was all
So there were witnesses that Paul was married,
And not to anyone to be ashamed of
Everyone had been wrong in judging Paul

Murphy told me Paul put on all those airs
About his wife to keep her to himself.
Paul was what's called a terrible possessor 150
Owning a wife with him meant owning her
She wasn't anybody else's business,
Either to praise her, or so much as name her,
And he'd thank people not to think of her
Murphy's idea was that a man like Paul
Wouldn't be spoken to about a wife
In any way the world knew how to speak
1923

Fire and Ice

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice
1923

Our Singing Strength

It snowed in spring on earth so dry and warm
The flakes could find no landing place to form
Hordes spent themselves to make it wet and cold,
And still they failed of any lasting hold
They made no white impression on the black
They disappeared as if earth sent them back
Not till from separate flakes they changed at night
To almost strips and tapes of ragged white
Did grass and garden ground confess it snowed,
And all go back to winter but the road. 10
Next day the scene was piled and puffed and
dead.
The grass lay flattened under one great tread,
Borne down until the end almost took root,
The rangey bough anticipated fruit
With snowballs cupped in every opening bud.
The road alone maintained itself in mud,
Whatever its secret was of greater heat
From inward fires or brush of passing feet
In spring more mortal singers than belong
To any one place cover us with song. 20
Thrush, bluebird, blackbird, sparrow, and robin
throng,

Some to go further north to Hudson's Bay,
 Some that have come too far north back away,
 Really a very few to build and stay.
 Now was seen how these liked belated snow.
 The fields had nowhere left for them to go;
 They'd soon exhausted all there was in flying;
 The trees they'd had enough of with once trying
 And setting off their heavy powder load.
 They could find nothing open but the road. 30
 So there they let their lives be narrowed in
 By thousands the bad weather made akin.
 The road became a channel running flocks
 Of glossy birds like ripples over rocks.
 I drove them under foot in bits of flight
 That kept the ground, almost disputing right
 Of way with me from apathy of wing,
 A talking twitter all they had to sing.
 A few I must have driven to despair

Made quick asides, but having done in air 40
 A whirl among white branches great and small
 As in some too much carven marble hall
 Where one false wing beat would have brought
 down all,
 Came tamely back in front of me, the Drover,
 To suffer the same driven nightmare over.
 One such storm in a lifetime couldn't teach them
 That back behind pursuit it couldn't reach them;
 None flew behind me to be left alone.

Well, something for a snowstorm to have shown
 The country's singing strength thus brought
 together, 50
 That though repressed and moody with the
 weather
 Was none the less there ready to be freed
 And sing the wildflowers up from root and seed.

CARL SANDBURG (1878-)

Carl [August] Sandburg was born in Galesburg, Illinois, into an immigrant Swedish family. After brief schooling, he worked as a laborer in the wheat fields and at odd jobs in the city. On his return from the Spanish-American War he worked his way through Lombard College. After his graduation in 1902 he was employed by turns as an advertising copy writer, journalist, safety-first expert, and organizer for the Social-Democratic Party of Wisconsin. In 1910-12 he was secretary to the Socialist mayor of Milwaukee. He published a small collection of poems at his own expense in 1904, but was not recognized until Harriet Monroe introduced him in her magazine, *Poetry*, in 1914. Then Sandburg quickly acquired a loyal band of Midwest admirers, and soon a national audience. His "Chicago" poem won a prize, and he has specialized ever since then in common experiences, faiths, and folk wisdom. He became an

itinerant lecturer, reading his own poems and singing folk songs to the accompaniment of his banjo. Out of his interest in ballads grew his collection of folk songs, *The American Songbag* (1927). He has also written several books for children. In 1939 he completed his four-volume biography of Abraham Lincoln, acknowledged by all critics as a masterpiece. *Remembrance Rock* (1948) is a poetic novel glorifying the American heritage.

Sandburg's published books of poetry are *Chicago Poems* (1916); *Cornhuskers* (1918); *Smoke and Steel* (1920), *Slabs of the Sunburnt West* (1922); *Good Morning, America* (1928); *Early Moon* [a juvenile] (1930), *The People, Yes* (1936). There are biographies by Harry Hansen, *Carl Sandburg and His Poetry*, Gnard, Kansas, 1925, and Karl Detzer, *Carl Sandburg: A Study in Personality and Background*, New York, 1941.

FROM

Chicago Poems

(1916)

*Chicago*¹

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler,
Stormy, husky, bawling,
City of the Big Shoulders.

They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I have seen your painted
women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys.
And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: Yes, it is true I have seen the
gunman kill and go free to kill again.
And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is: On the faces of women and children
I have seen the marks of wanton hunger.

¹ This and the next twelve poems are from *Chicago Poems* by Carl Sandburg. Copyright 1916 by Henry Holt and Company. Copyright 1943 by Carl Sandburg.

And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at this my city, and
 I give them back the sneer and say to them:
 Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive
 and coarse and strong and cunning. 10
 Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on job, here is a tall bold
 slugger set vivid against the little soft cities;
 Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning as a savage pitted against
 the wilderness,
 Bareheaded,
 Shoveling,
 Wrecking,
 Planning,
 Building, breaking, rebuilding.
 Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with white teeth,
 Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man laughs,
 Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has never lost a battle, 20
 Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse, and under his ribs the
 heart of the people,
 Laughing!

Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth, half-naked,
 sweating, proud to be Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
 Player with Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation.

1913

1916

The Walking Man of Rodin

Legs hold a torso away from the earth.
 And a regular high poem of legs is here.
 Powers of bone and chord raise a belly and lungs
 Out of ooze and over the loam where eyes look and ears hear
 And arms have a chance to hammer and shoot and run motors.
 You make us
 Proud of our legs, old man.

And you left off the head here,
 The skull found always crumbling neighbor of the ankles.

1916

Happiness

I asked professors who teach the meaning of life to tell me what is happiness.
 And I went to famous executives who boss the work of thousands of men.
 They all shook their heads and gave me a smile as though I was trying to fool with
 them.
 And then one Sunday afternoon I wandered out along the Desplaines river
 And I saw a crowd of Hungarians under the trees with their women and children
 and a keg of beer and an accordion.

1916

Mag

I wish to God I never saw you, Mag
 I wish you never quit your job and came along with me
 I wish we never bought a license and a white dress
 For you to get married in the day we ran off to a minister
 And told him we would love each other and take care of each other
 Always and always long as the sun and the rain lasts anywhere
 Yes, I'm wishing now you lived somewhere away from here
 And I was a bum on the bumpers a thousand miles away dead broke.

I wish the kids had never come
 And rent and coal and clothes to pay for
 And a grocery man calling for cash,
 Every day cash for beans and prunes
 I wish to God I never saw you, Mag
 I wish to God the kids had never come.

10

1916

Mamie

Mamie beat her head against the bars of a little Indiana town and dreamed of
 romance and big things off somewhere the way the railroad trains all ran.
 She could see the smoke of the engines get lost down where the streaks of steel
 flashed in the sun and when the newspapers came in on the morning mail she
 knew there was a big Chicago far off, where all the trains ran.
 She got tired of the barber shop boys and the post office chatter and the church
 gossip and the old pieces the band played on the Fourth of July and
 Decoration Day
 And sobbed at her fate and beat her head against the bars and was going to kill herself
 When the thought came to her that if she was going to die she might as well die
 struggling for a clutch of romance among the streets of Chicago
 She has a job now at six dollars a week in the basement of the Boston Store
 And even now she beats her head against the bars in the same old way and wonders
 if there is a bigger place the railroads run to from Chicago where maybe there is
 romance
 and big things
 and real dreams
 that never go smash.

10

1916

Fog

The fog comes
 on little cat feet.
 It sits looking
 over harbor and city
 on silent haunches
 and then moves on.

1912

1916

*Killers*²

I am singing to you
 Soft as a man with a dead child speaks;
 Hard as a man in handcuffs,
 Held where he cannot move:

Under the sun
 Are sixteen million men,

² Published in *Poetry*, October, 1915.

Chosen for shining teeth,
Sharp eyes, hard legs,
And a running of young warm blood in their
wrists.

And a red juice runs on the green grass; 10
And a red juice soaks the dark soil.
And the sixteen million are killing . . . and
killing and killing.

I never forget them day or night:
They beat on my head for memory of them;
They pound on my heart and I cry back to them,
To their homes and women, dreams and games.

I wake in the night and smell the trenches,
And hear the low stir of sleepers in lines—
Sixteen million sleepers and pickets in the dark:
Some of them long sleepers for always, 20
Some of them tumbling to sleep to-morrow for
always,
Fixed in the drag of the world's heartbreak,
Eating and drinking, toiling . . . on a long
job of killing.
Sixteen million men.

1915 1916

Who Am I?

My head knocks against the stars.
My feet are on the hilltops.
My finger-tips are in the valleys and shores of
universal life.
Down in the sounding foam of primal things
I reach my hands and play with pebbles of
destiny.
I have been to hell and back many times.
I know all about heaven, for I have talked with
God.
I dabble in the blood and guts of the terrible.
I know the passionate seizure of beauty
And the marvelous rebellion of man at all signs
reading "Keep Off."

My name is Truth and I am the most elusive
captive in the universe. 10
1916

*Under the Harvest Moon*³

Under the harvest moon,
When the soft silver

³ Published in *Poetry*, October, 1915.

Drips shimmering
Over the garden nights,
Death, the gray mocker,
Comes and whispers to you
As a beautiful friend
Who remembers.

Under the summer roses
When the flagrant crimson 10
Lurks in the dusk
Of the wild red leaves,
Love, with little hands,
Comes and touches you
With a thousand memories,
And asks you
Beautiful, unanswerable questions.
1915 1916

*The Great Hunt*⁴

I cannot tell you now;
When the wind's drive and whirl
Blow me along no longer,
And the wind's a whisper at last—
Maybe I'll tell you then—
some other time.

When the rose's flash to the sunset
Reels to the rack and the twist,
And the rose is a red bygone,
When the face I love is going 10
And the gate to the end shall clang,
And it's no use to beckon or say, "So long"—
Maybe I'll tell you then—
some other time.

I never knew any more beautiful than you:
I have hunted you under my thoughts,
I have broken down under the wind
And into the roses looking for you.
I shall never find any
greater than you.
1915 1916

Nocturne in a Deserted Brickyard

Stuff of the moon
Runs on the lapping sand
Out to the longest shadows.
Under the curving willows,
And round the creep of the wave line,

⁴ Published in *Poetry*, October, 1915.

Fluxions of yellow and dusk on the waters
 Make a wide dreaming pansy of an old pond in
 the night
 1910

Nobody knows why she packed her trunk . . .
 a few old things
 And is gone,

1916

Gone

Everybody loved Chick Lorimer in our town
 Far off
 Everybody loved her
 So we all love a wild girl keeping a hold
 On a dream she wants
 Nobody knows now where Chick Lorimer went

Gone with her little chin
 Thrust ahead of her
 And her soft hair blowing careless
 From under a wide hat,
 Dancer, singer, a laughing passionate lover
 Were there ten men or a hundred hunting Chick?
 Were there five men or fifty with aching hearts?
 Everybody loved Chick Lorimer
 Nobody knows where she's gone
 1916

I Am the People, the Mob

I am the people—the mob—the crowd—the mass
 Do you know that all the great work of the world is done through me?
 I am the workingman, the inventor, the maker of the world's food and clothes
 I am the audience that witnesses history The Napoleons come from me and the
 Lincolns. They die And then I send forth more Napoleons and Lincolns
 I am the seed ground I am a prairie that will stand for much plowing Terrible
 storms pass over me I forget The best of me is sucked out and wasted.
 I forget Everything but Death comes to me and makes me work and give up
 what I have And I forget
 Sometimes I growl, shake myself and spatter a few red drops for history to
 remember Then—I forget.
 When I, the People, learn to remember, when I, the People, use the lessons of
 yesterday and no longer forget who robbed me last year, who played me for a
 fool—then there will be no speaker in all the world say the name. "The People,"
 with any flick of a sneer in his voice or any far-off smile of decision.
 The mob—the crowd—the mass—will arrive then.
 1914

1916

FROM

Cornhuskers

(1918)

*Wilderness*⁵

There is a wolf in me . . . fangs pointed for tearing gashes . . . a red tongue for
 raw meat . . . and the hot lapping of blood—I keep this wolf because the
 wilderness gave it to me and the wilderness will not let it go.

There is a fox in me . . . a silver-gray fox . . . I sniff and guess . . . I pick things
 out of the wind and air . . . I nose in the dark night and take sleepers and
 eat them and hide the feathers . . . I circle and loop and double-cross

⁵ This and the next two poems are from *Cornhuskers* by Carl Sandburg. Copyright 1918 by Henry Holt and Company. Copyright 1945 by Carl Sandburg.

There is a hog in me . . . a snout and a belly . . . a machinery for eating and grunting . . . a machinery for sleeping satisfied in the sun—I got this too from the wilderness and the wilderness will not let it go.

There is a fish in me . . . I know I came from salt-blue water-gates . . . I scurried with shoals of herring . . . I blew waterspouts with porpoises . . . before land was . . . before the water went down . . . before Noah . . . before the first chapter of Genesis.

There is a baboon in me . . . clambering-clawed . . . dog-faced . . . yawping a galoot's hunger . . . hairy under the armpits . . . here are the hawk-eyed hankering men . . . here are the blond and blue-eyed women . . . here they hide curled asleep waiting . . . ready to snarl and kill . . . ready to sing and give milk . . . waiting—I keep the baboon because the wilderness says so.

There is an eagle in me and a mockingbird . . . and the eagle flies among the Rocky Mountains of my dreams and fights among the Sierra crags of what I want . . . and the mockingbird warbles in the early forenoon before the dew is gone, warbles in the underbrush of my Chattanooga of hope, gushes over the blue Ozark foothills of my wishes—And I got the eagle and the mockingbird from the wilderness.

O, I got a zoo, I got a menagerie, inside my ribs, under my bony head, under my red-valve heart—and I got something else: it is a man-child heart, a woman-child heart: it is a father and mother and lover: it came from God-Knows-Where: it is going to God-Knows-Where—For I am the keeper of the zoo: I say yes and no: I sing and kill and work: I am a pal of the world: I came from the wilderness.

1917

1918

Prayers of Steel

Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a crowbar.
Let me pry loose old walls.
Let me lift and loosen old foundations.

Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a steel spike.
Drive me into the girders that hold a skyscraper together.
Take red-hot rivets and fasten me into the central girders.
Let me be the great nail holding a skyscraper through blue nights into white stars.

1917

1918

Cool Tombs

When Abraham Lincoln was shoveled into the tombs, he forgot the copperheads
and the assassin . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs.

And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of con men and Wall Street, cash and collateral
turned ashes . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs.

Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November or a pawpaw
 in May, did she wonder? does she remember? in the dust, in the cool
 tombs?

Take any streetful of people buying clothes and groceries, cheering a hero or throwing
 confetti and blowing tin horns . . . tell me if the lovers are losers . . . tell me
 if any get more than the lovers in the dust in the cool tombs

1915 1918

FROM

Smoke and Steel

(1920)

*Crabapple Blossoms*⁶

Somebody's little girl—how easy to make a sob story over who she was once and
 who she is now

Somebody's little girl—she played once under a crabapple tree in June and the
 blossoms fell on the dark hair

It was somewhere on the Erie line and the town was Salamanca or Painted Post or
 Horse's Head

And out of her hair she shook the blossoms and went into the house and her mother
 washed her face and her mother had an ache in her heart at a rebel voice,
 "I don't want to"

Somebody's little girl—forty little girls of somebodies splashed in red tights forming
 horeshoes, arches, pyramids—forty little show girls, ponies, squabs

How easy a sob story over who she once was and who she is now—and how the
 crabapple blossoms fell on her dark hair in June.

Let the lights of Broadway spangle and splatter—and the taxis hustle the crowds
 away when the show is over and the street goes dark

Let the girls wash off the paint and go for their midnight sandwiches—let 'em dream
 in the morning sun, late in the morning, long after the morning papers and
 the milk wagons—

Let 'em dream long as they want to . . . of June somewhere on the Erie line . . .
 and crabapple blossoms

1920

Jazz Fantasia

Drum on your drums, batter on your banjos,
 sob on the long cool winding saxophones.
 Go to it, O jazzmen

Shing your knuckles on the bottoms of the happy
 tin pans, let your trombones ooze, and go husha-husha-hush
 with the slippery sand-paper.

Moan like an autumn wind high in the lonesome tree-tops, moan soft like you wanted
 somebody terrible, cry like a racing car slipping away from a motorcycle cop, bang-bang!

⁶ This and the next two poems are from *Smoke and Steel* by Carl Sandburg Copyright 1920 by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

you jazzmen, bang altogether drums, traps, banjoes, horns, tin cans—make two people fight on the top of a stairway and scratch each other's eyes in a clinch tumbling down the stairs.

Can the rough stuff . . . now a Mississippi steamboat pushes up the night river with a hoo-hoo-hoo-oo . . .
and the green lanterns calling to the high soft stars . . .
a red moon rides on the humps of the low river hills . . .
go to it, O Jazzmen.

1919

1920

*Accomplished Facts*⁷

Every year Emily Dickinson sent one friend
the first arbutus bud in her garden.

In a last will and testament Andrew Jackson
remembered a friend with the gift of George
Washington's pocket spy-glass.

Napoleon too, in a last testament, mentioned a silver
watch taken from the bedroom of Frederick the Great,
and passed along this trophy to a particular friend.

O. Henry took a blood carnation from his coat lapel
and handed it to a country girl starting work in a
bean bazaar, and scribbled: "Peach blossoms may or
may not stay pink in city dust."

10

So it goes. Some things we buy, some not.
Tom Jefferson was proud of his radishes, and Abe
Lincoln blacked his own boots, and Bismarck called
Berlin a wilderness of brick and newspapers.

So it goes. There are accomplished facts.
Ride, ride, ride on in the great new blimps—
Cross unheard-of oceans, circle the planet.
When you come back we may sit by five hollyhocks.
We might listen to boys fighting for marbles.
The grasshopper will look good to us.

20

So it goes . . .

1920

FROM

*The People, Yes*107⁸

The people will live on.
The learning and blundering people will live on.

They will be tricked and sold and again sold
And go back to the nourishing earth for rootholds,
The people so peculiar in renewal and
comeback,

You can't laugh off their capacity to take it.
The mammoth rests between his cyclonic dramas.

⁷ Published in *Poetry*, February, 1920.⁸ From *The People, Yes* by Carl Sandburg. Copyright 1936 by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

The people so often sleepy, weary, enigmatic,
is a vast huddle with many units saying

"I earn my living
I make enough to get by
and it takes all my time
If I had more time
I could do more for myself
and maybe for others
I could read and study
and talk things over
and find out about things
It takes time
I wish I had the time"

The people is a tragic and comic two-face
hero and hoodlum phantom and gorilla twist-
ing to moan with a gargoyle mouth "They
buy me and sell me . . . it's a game . . .
someday I'll break loose . . ."

Once having marched
Over the margins of animal necessity,
Over the grim line of sheer subsistence
Then man came
To the deeper rituals of his bones,
To the lights lighter than any bones,
To the time for thinking things over,
To the dance, the song, the story,
On the hours given over to dreaming,
Once having so marched

Between the finite limitations of the five senses
and the endless yearnings of man for the beyond
the people hold to the humdrum bidding of work
and food

while reaching out when it comes their way
for lights beyond the prison of the five senses,
for keepsakes lasting beyond any hunger or death.

This reaching is alive.
The panders and liars have violated and
smutted it
Yet this reaching is alive yet
for lights and keepsakes

The people know the salt of the sea
and the strength of the winds
10 lashing the corners of the earth
The people take the earth
as a tomb of rest and a cradle of hope 50
Who else speaks for the Family of Man?
They are in tune and step
with constellations of universal law
The people is a polychrome,
a spectrum and a prism
held in a moving monolith,
a console organ of changing themes,
20 a clavilux of color poems
wherein the sea offers fog
and the fog moves off in rain 60
and the labrador sunset shortens
to a nocturne of clear stars
serene over the shot spray
of northern lights

The steel mill sky is alive
The fire breaks white and zigzag
shot on a gun-metal gloaming.
30 Man is a long time coming.
Man will yet win
Brother may yet line up with brother 70

This old anvil laughs at many broken hammers
There are men who can't be bought.
The fireborn are at home in fire.
The stars make no noise.
You can't hinder the wind from blowing.
Time is a great teacher
Who can live without hope?

40 In the darkness with a great bundle of grief
the people march.
In the night, and overhead a shovel of stars for 80
keeps, the people march:

"Where to? what next?"

1936

ROBINSON JEFFERS (1887-)

[John] Robinson Jeffers was born in Pittsburgh, the first child of William Hamilton Jeffers, A.B., D.D., LL.D. His parents were English-Scotch-Irish. Dr. Jeffers was Professor of Old Testament at Western Theological Seminary (Presbyterian). At the age of five Robinson was reading Greek with his father, then traveled with his parents in Great Britain, France, Spain, and Italy. From twelve to fifteen he studied in boarding schools in Geneva, Lausanne, Zürich, and Leipzig. At fifteen he entered the University of Western Pennsylvania, but the following year went to California with his parents when his father resigned his professorship on account of ill health. Robinson Jeffers entered Occidental College, from which he was graduated in 1905, at the age of eighteen. He then took graduate work at the University of California at Los Angeles, studied for a short time at the University of Zürich, entered the College of Physicians at the University of Southern California but withdrew when his parents moved to Seattle. For a year he studied in the School of Forestry at the University of Washington, but disliked the required mathematics and cutting down trees.

In 1912 Jeffers became temporarily independent through an inheritance from a banker cousin in Pittsburgh and printed at his own expense his first book of poems, *Flagons and Apples*. The following year Una Call Kuster, whom he had met and fallen in love with at the University of Southern California, ob-

tained a divorce so that she could marry Jeffers. They took a cottage in the pine woods at Carmel in 1914. Having two sons, Jeffers did not volunteer immediately for combat duty in World War I, but he was awaiting induction into the balloon service when the armistice was signed. At Carmel he built Tor House, with its famous stone tower, where he did his writing. In most of his long poems he has used the geography of the surrounding coast-range for setting. In 1931 he made a trip to England and Ireland, where he wrote *Descent to the Dead*. He has also drawn upon Celtic myth for other poems. The philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche have influenced his tragic conception of life. *Roan Stallion*, *Tamar*, and *Other Poems* established his reputation in 1925.

Jeffers has published the following books of poems: *Flagons and Apples* (1912); *Californians* (1916); *Tamar and Other Poems* (1924); *Roan Stallion, Tamar, and Other Poems* (1925); *The Women at Point Sur* (1927); *Cawdor, and Other Poems* (1928); *Dear Judas, and Other Poems* (1929); *Descent to the Dead* (1931); *Thurso's Landing, and Other Poems* (1932); *Solstice, and Other Poems* (1935); *Such Counsels You Gave Me, and Other Poems* (1937); *Selected Poetry* (1938); *Medea* (1946); *The Double Axe* (1948). The best biography is by L. C. Powell, *Robinson Jeffers: The Man and His Work*, revised edition, Pasadena, 1940.

FROM

Roan Stallion

(1925)

*Roan Stallion*¹

The dog barked; then the woman stood in the doorway, and hearing iron strike stone
down the steep road
Covered her head with a black shawl and entered the light rain; she stood at the turn
of the road.

¹ Title poem from the collection *Roan Stallion* by Robinson Jeffers. Copyright 1935 by The Modern Library. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

A nobly formed woman; erect and strong as a new tower, the features stolid and dark
 But sculptured into a strong grace, straight nose with a high bridge, firm and wide
 eyes, full chin,
 Red lips, she was only a fourth part Indian, a Scottish sailor had planted her in
 young native earth,
 Spanish and Indian, twenty-one years before He had named her California when she
 was born,
 That was her name, and had gone north

She heard the hooves and

wheels come nearer, up the steep road
 The buckskin mare, leaning against the bicastpiece, plodded into sight round the
 wet bank
 The pale face of the driver followed, the burnt-out eyes, they had fortune in them
 He sat twisted
 On the seat of the old buggy, leading a second horse by a long halter, a roan,
 a big one, 10
 That stepped daintily, by the swell of the neck, a stallion "What have you got,
 Johnny?" "Maskerel's stallion
 Mine now I won him last night, I had very good luck" He was quite drunk "They
 bring their mares up here now
 I keep this fellow I got money besides, but I'll not show you"
 "Did you buy something, Johnny,
 For our Christine? Christmas comes in two days, Johnny" "By God, forgot," he
 answered laughing
 "Don't tell Christine it's Christmas, after while I get her something, maybe."
 But California
 "I shared your luck when you lost you lost *me* once, Johnny, remember? Tom Dell
 had me two nights
 Here in the house other times we've gone hungry now that you've won, Christine
 will have her Christmas
 We share your luck, Johnny You give me money, I go down to Monterey to-morrow,
 Buy presents for Christine, come back in the evening Next day Christmas"
 "You have wet ride," he answered
 Giggling. "Here money. Five dollar, ten, twelve dollar. You buy two bottles of rye
 whiskey for Johnny." 20
 "All right I go to-morrow."

He was an outcast Hollander, not old, but shriveled

with bad living.
 The child Christine inherited from his race blue eyes, from his life a wizened
 forehead; she watched
 From the house-door her father lurch out of the buggy and lead with due respect
 the stallion
 To the new corral, the strong one; leaving the wearily breathing buckskin mare to
 his wife to unharness

Storm in the night, the rain on the thin shakes of the roof like the ocean on rock
 streamed battering, once thunder
 Walked down the narrow canyon into Carmel valley and wore away westward;
 Christine was wakeful

With fears and wonders; her father lay too deep for storm to touch
him.

Dawn comes late in the year's dark,
Later into the crack of a canyon under redwoods; and California slipped from bed
An hour before it; the bucksin would be tired; there was a little barley and why
should Johnny
Feed all the barley to his stallion? That is what he would do. She tip-toed out of
the room. 30
Leaving her clothes, he'd waken if she waited to put them on, and passed from the
door of the house
Into the dark of the rain; the big black drops were cold through the thin shift, but
the wet earth
Pleasant under her naked feet. There was a pleasant smell in the stable; and moving
softly,
Touching things gently with the supple bend of the unclothed body, was pleasant.
She found a box,
Filled it with sweet dry barley and took it down to the old corral. The little mare
sighed deeply
At the rail in the wet darkness; and California returning between two redwoods up
to the house
Heard the happy jaws grinding the grain. Johnny could mind the pigs and chickens.
Christine called to her
When she entered the house, but slept again under her hand. She laid the wet
night-dress on a chair-back
And stole into the bedroom to get her clothes. A plank creaked, and he wakened.
She stood motionless
Hearing him stir in the bed. When he was quiet she stooped after her shoes, and
he said softly, 40
"What are you doing? Come back to bed." "It's late, I'm going to Monterey,
I must hitch up."
"You come to bed first. I been away three days. I give you money, I take back the
money
And what you do in town then?" she sighed sharply and came to
the bed.

He reaching his hands from it
Felt the cool curve and firmness of her flank, and half rising caught her by the
long wet hair.
She endured, and to hasten the act she feigned desire; she had not for long, except
in dream, felt it.
Yesterday's drunkenness made him sluggish and exacting; she saw, turning her
head sadly,
The windows were bright gray with dawn; he embraced her still, stopping to talk
about the stallion.
At length she was permitted to put on her clothes. Clear daylight over the steep
hills;
Gray-shining cloud over the tops of the redwoods; the winter stream sang loud;
the wheels of the buggy
Slipped in deep slime, ground on washed stones at the road-edge. Down the hill
the wrinkled river smothered the ford. 50

You must keep to the bed of stones: she knew the way by willow and alder the
 buckskin halted mid-stream,
 Shuddering, the water her own color washing up to the traces, but California,
 drawing up
 Her feet out of the whirl onto the seat of the buggy swung the whip over the
 yellow water
 And drove to the road

All morning the clouds were racing northward like a river
 At noon they thickened.
 When California faced the southwind home from Monterey it was heavy with level
 rainfall
 She looked seaward from the foot of the valley, red rays cried sunset from a trumpet
 of streaming
 Cloud over Lobos, the southwest occident of the solstice Twilight came soon, but
 the tired mare
 Feared the road more than the whip Mile after mile of slow gray
 twilight

Then, quite suddenly, darkness
 "Christine will be asleep. It is Christmas Eve The ford That hour of daylight
 wasted this morning!"
 She could see nothing, she let the reins lie on the dashboard and knew at length
 by the cramp of the wheels
 And the pitch down, they had reached it Noise of wheels on stones, plashing of
 hooves in water, a world
 Of sounds; no sight, the gentle thunder of water, the mare snorting, dipping her
 head, one knew,
 To look for footing, in the blackness, under the stream The hushing and creaking
 of the sea-wind
 In the passion of invisible willows

The mare stood still, the woman
 shouted to her, spared whip,
 For a false leap would lose the track of the ford. She stood "The baby's things,"
 thought California,
 "Under the seat the water will come over the floor", and rising in the midst of the
 water
 She tilted the seat, fetched up the doll, the painted wooden chickens, the woolly
 bear, the book
 Of many pictures, the box of sweets: she brought them all from under the seat
 and stored them, trembling,
 Under her clothes, about the biscuits, under the arms, the corners of the cardboard
 boxes
 Cut into the soft flesh; but with a piece of rope for a girdle and wound about the
 shoulders

All was made fast. The mare stood still as if asleep in the midst of the water.
 Then California
 Reached out a hand over the stream and fingered her rump, the solid wet convexity
 of it
 Shook like the beat of a great heart. "What are you waiting for?" But the feel of
 the animal surface

60

70

Had wakened a dream, obscured real danger with a dream of danger. "What for?
 For the water-stallion
 To break out of the stream, that is what the rump strains for, him to come up
 flinging foam sidewise,
 Fore-hooves in air, crush me and the rig and curl over his woman." She flung out
 with the whip then,
 The mare plunged forward. The buggy drifted sidelong: was she off ground?
 Swimming? No: by the splashes.
 The driver, a mere prehensile instinct, clung to the side-irons of the seat and felt
 the force
 But not the coldness of the water, curling over her knees, breaking up to the
 waist
 Over her body. They'd turned. The mare had turned up stream and was wallowing
 back into shoal water. 80
 Then California dropped her forehead to her knees, having seen nothing, feeling
 a danger,
 And felt the brute weight of a branch of alder, the pendulous light leaves brush
 her bent neck
 Like a child's fingers. The mare burst out of water and stopped on the slope to
 the ford. The woman climbed down
 Between the wheels and went to her head. "Poor Dora," she called her by her name,
 "there, Dora. Quietly,"
 And led her around, there was room to turn on the margin, the head to the gentle
 thunder of the water.
 She crawled on hands and knees, felt for the ruts, and shifted the wheels into
 them. "You can see, Dora.
 I can't. But this time you'll go through it." She climbed into the seat and shouted
 angrily. The mare
 Stopped, her two forefeet in the water. She touched with the whip. The mare
 plodded ahead and halted.
 Then California thought of prayer: "Dear little Jesus,
 Dear baby Jesus born to-night, your head was shining 90
 Like silver candles. I've got a baby too, only a girl. You had light wherever you
 walked.
 Dear baby Jesus give me light." Light streamed: rose, gold, rich purple, hiding the
 ford like a curtain.
 The gentle thunder of water was a noise of wing-feathers, the fans of paradise
 lifting softly.
 The child afloat on radiance had a baby face, but the angels had birds' heads,
 hawks' heads,
 Bending over the baby, weaving a web of wings about him. He held in the small
 fat hand
 A little snake with golden eyes, and California could see clearly on the under
 radiance
 The mare's pricked ears, a sharp black fork against the shining light-fall. But it
 dropped; the light of heaven
 Frightened poor Dora. She backed; swung up the water,
 And nearly oversetting the buggy turned and scrambled backward; the iron wheel-
 tires rang on boulders.

Then California weeping climbed between the wheels. Her wet clothes and the
 toys packed under 100
 Dragged her down with their weight, she stripped off cloak and dress and laid the
 baby's things in the buggy,
 Brought Johnny's whiskey out from under the seat, wrapped all in the dress, bottles
 and toys, and tied them
 Into a bundle that would sling over her back She unharnessed the mare, hurting
 her fingers
 Against the swollen straps and the wet buckles She tied the pack over her
 shoulders, the cords
 Crossing her breasts, and mounted She drew up her shift about her waist and
 knotted, naked thighs
 Clutching the sides of the mare, bare flesh to the wet withers, and caught the mane
 with her right hand,
 The looped-up bridle-reins in the other "Dora, the baby gives you light" The
 blinding radiance
 Hovered the ford. "Sweet baby Jesus give us light" Cataracts of light and Latin
 singing
 Fell through willows, the mare snorted and reared the roar and thunder of the
 invisible water;
 The night shaking open like a flag, shot with the flashes; the baby face hovering;
 the water 110
 Beating over her shoes and stockings up to the bare thighs; and over them, like
 a beast
 Lapping her belly; the wriggle and pitch of the mare swimming, the drift, the
 sucking water; the blinding
 Light above and behind with not a gleam before, in the throat of darkness, the
 shock of the fore-hooves
 Striking bottom, the struggle and surging lift of the haunches She felt the water
 streaming off her
 From the shoulders down, heard the great strain and sob of the mare's breathing,
 heard the horseshoes grind on gravel
 When California came home the dog at the door snuffed at her without barking;
 Christine and Johnny
 Both were asleep; she did not sleep for hours, but kindled fire and knelt patiently
 over it,
 Shaping and drying the dear-bought gifts for Christmas morning

She hated (she thought) the proud-necked stallion.
 He'd lean the big twin masses of his breast on the rail, his red-brown eyes flash
 the white crescents, 120
 She admired him then, she hated him for his uselessness, seeing nothing
 But Johnny's vanity. Horses were too cheap to breed. She thought, if he could range
 in freedom,
 Shaking the red-roan mane for a flag on the bare hills.

A man

brought up a mare in April,
 Then California, though she wanted to watch, stayed with Christine indoors. When
 the child fretted

The mother told her once more about the miracle of the ford; her prayer to the
 little Jesus
 The Christmas Eve when she was bringing the gifts home; the appearance, the
 lights, the Latin singing,
 The thunder of wing-feathers and water, the shining child, the cataracts of splendor
 down the darkness.
 "A little baby," Christine asked, "the God is a baby?" "The child of God. That
 was his birthday.
 His mother was named Mary: we pray to her too: God came to her. He was not
 the child of a man
 Like you or me. God was his father: she was the stallion's wife—what did I say—
 God's wife," 130
 She said with a cry, lifting Christine aside, pacing the planks of the floor. "She is
 called more blessed
 Than any woman. She was so good, she was more loved." "Did God live near her
 house?" "He lives
 Up high, over the stars; he ranges on the bare blue hill of the sky." In her mind
 a picture
 Flashed, of the red-roan mane shaken out for a flag on the bare hills, and she said
 quickly, "He's more
 Like a great man holding the sun in his hand." Her mind giving her words the
 lie, "But no one
 Knows, only the shining and the power. The power, the terror, the burning fire
 covered her over . . ."
 "Was she burnt up, mother?" "She was so good and lovely, she was the mother
 of the little Jesus.
 If you are good nothing will hurt you." "What did she think?" "She loved, she
 was not afraid of the hooves—
 Hands that had made the hills and sun and moon, and the sea and the great red-
 woods, the terrible strength,
 She gave herself without thinking." "You only saw the baby, mother?" "Yes, and
 the angels about him, 140
 The great wild shining over the black river." Three times she had walked to the
 door, three times returned,
 And now the hand that had thrice hung on the knob, full of prevented action,
 twisted the cloth
 Of the child's dress that she had been mending. "Oh, oh, I've torn it." She struck
 at the child and then embraced her
 Fiercely, the small blonde sickly body.
 Johnny came in, his face reddened as if
 he had stood
 Near fire, his eyes triumphing. "Finished," he said, and looked with malice at
 Christine. "I go
 Down valley with Jim Carrier; owes me five dollar, fifteen I charge him, he brought
 ten in his pocket.
 Has grapes on the ranch, maybe I take a barrel red wine instead of money. Be
 back to-morrow.
 To-morrow night I tell you— Eh, Jim," he laughed over his shoulder, "I say
 to-morrow evening

I show her how the red fellow act, the big fellow "When I come home" She
 answered nothing, but stood
 In front of the door, holding the little hand of her daughter, in the path of sun
 between the redwoods, 150
 While Johnny tied the buckskin mare behind Carrier's buggy, and bringing saddle
 and bridle tossed them
 Under the seat Jim Carrier's mare, the bay, stood with drooped head and started
 slowly, the men
 Laughing and shouting at her, their voices could be heard down the steep road,
 after the noise
 Of the iron-hooped wheels died from the stone Then one might hear the hush
 of the wind in the tall redwoods.
 The tinkle of the April brook, deep in its hollow

Humanity is the start of the race,

I say
 Humanity is the mould to break away from, the crust to break through, the coal
 to break into fire,
 The atom to be split
 Tragedy that breaks man's face and a white fire flies out
 of it, vision that fools him
 Out of his limits, desire that fools him out of his limits, unnatural crime, inhuman
 science,
 Slit eyes in the mask; wild loves that leap over the walls of nature, the wild fence-
 vaulter science,
 Useless intelligence of far stars, dim knowledge of the spinning demons that make
 an atom, 160
 These break, these pierce, these defy, praising their God shilly with fierce voices
 not in a man's shape
 He approves the praise, he that walks lightning-naked on the Pacific, that laces
 the suns with planets,
 The heart of the atom with electrons what is humanity in this cosmos? For him,
 the last
 Least taint of a trace in the dregs of the solution, for itself, the mould to break
 away from, the coal
 To break into fire, the atom to be split.

After the child slept, after the leopard-

footed evening
 Had glided oceanward, California turned the lamp to its least flame and glided
 from the house
 She moved sighing, like a loose fire, backward and forward on the smooth ground
 by the door
 She heard the night-wind that draws down the valley like the draught in a flue
 under clear weather
 Whisper and toss in the tall redwoods; she heard the tinkle of the April brook
 deep in its hollow.
 Cooled by the night the odors that the horses had left behind were in her nostrils;
 the night 170

Whitened up the bare hill; a drift of coyotes by the river cried bitterly against
 moonrise;
 Then California ran to the old corral, the empty one where they kept the buckskin
 mare,
 And leaned, and bruised her breasts on the rail, feeling the sky whiten. When the
 moon stood over the hill
 She stole to the house. The child breathed quietly. Herself: to sleep? She had seen
 Christ in the night at Christmas.
 The hills were shining open to the enormous night of the April moon: empty
 and empty,
 The vast round backs of the bare hills? If one should ride up high might not the
 Father himself
 Be seen brooding His night, cross-legged, chin in hand, squatting on the last dome?
 More likely
 Leaping the hills, shaking the red-roan mane for a flag on the bare hills. She blew
 out the lamp.
 Every fiber of flesh trembled with faintness when she came to the door; strength
 lacked, to wander
 Afoot into the shining of the hill, high enough, high enough . . . the hateful face
 of a man had taken 180
 The strength that might have served her, the corral was empty. The dog followed
 her, she caught him by the collar,
 Dragged him in fierce silence back to the door of the house, latched him
 inside.
 It was like daylight
 Outdoors and she hastened without faltering down the footpath, through the dark
 fringe of twisted oak-brush,
 To the open place in a bay of the hill. The dark strength of the stallion had heard
 her coming; she heard him
 Blow the shining air out of his nostrils, she saw him in the white lake of moonlight
 Move like a lion along the timbers of the fence, shaking the nightfall
 Of the great mane; his fragrance came to her; she leaned on the fence;
 He drew away from it, the hooves making soft thunder in the trodden soil.
 Wild love had trodden it, his wrestling with the stranger, the shame of the day
 Had stamped it into mire and powder when the heavy fetlocks 190
 Strained the soft flanks. "Oh, if I could bear you!
 If I had the strength. O great God that came down to Mary, gently you came. But
 I will ride him
 Up into the hill, if he throws me, if he tramples me, is it not my desire
 To endure death?" She climbed the fence, pressing her body against the rail,
 shaking like fever,
 And dropped inside to the soft ground. He neither threatened her with his teeth
 nor fled from her coming,
 And lifting her hand gently to the upflung head she caught the strap of the headstall,
 That hung under the quivering chin. She unlooped the halter from the high strength
 of the neck
 And the arch the storm-cloud mane hung with live darkness. He stood; she crushed
 her breasts

On the hard shoulder, an arm over the withers, the other under the mass of his
 throat, and murmuring
 Like a mountain dove, "If I could bear you" No way, no help, a gulf in nature
 She murmured, "Come, 200
 We will run on the hill O beautiful, O beautiful," and led him
 To the gate and flung the bars on the ground. He threw his head downward
 To snuff at the bars, and while he stood, she catching mane and withers with all
 sudden contacture
 And strength of her lithe body, leaped, clung hard, and was mounted He had been
 ridden before, he did not
 Fight the weight but ran like a stone falling,
 Broke down the slope into the moon-glass of the stream, and flattened to his neck
 She felt the branches of a buckeye tree fly over her, saw the wall of the oak-scrub
 End her world but he turned there, the matted branches
 Scraped her right knee, the great slant shoulders
 Laboring the hill-slope, up, up, the clear hill Desire had died in her 210
 At the first rush, the falling like death, but now it revived,
 She feeling between her thighs the labor of the great engine, the running muscles,
 the hard swiftness,
 She riding the savage and exultant strength of the world Having topped the thicket
 he turned eastward,
 Running less wildly, and now at length he felt the halter when she drew on it; she
 guided him upward,
 He stopped and grazed on the great aitch and pride of the hill, the silent calvary.
 A dwarfish oakwood
 Climbed the other slope out of the dark of the unknown canyon beyond, the last
 wind-beaten bush of it
 Crawled up to the height, and California slipping from her mount tethered him
 to it. She stood then,
 Shaking. Enormous films of moonlight
 Trailed down from the height. Space, anxious whiteness, vastness. Distant beyond
 conception the shining ocean
 Lay light like a haze along the ledge and doubtful world's end. Little vapors gleam-
 ing, and little 220
 Darknesses on the far chart underfoot symbolized wood and valley; but the air was
 the clement, the moon-
 Saturate arcs and spires of the air.
 Here is solitude, here on the calvary, nothing
 conscious
 But the possible God and the cropped grass, no witness, no eye but that mis-
 formed one, the moon's past fullness.
 Two figures on the shining hill, woman and stallion, she kneeling to him, brokenly
 adorning.
 He cropping the grass, shifting his hooves, or lifting the long head to gaze over
 the world,
 Tranquil and powerful She prayed aloud, "O God, I am not good enough, O fear,
 O strength, I am dragged
 Johnny and other men have had me, and O clean power! Here am I," she said,
 falling before him,

And crawled to his hooves. She lay a long while, as if asleep, in reach of the fore-hooves, weeping. He avoided
Her head and the prone body. He backed at first; but later plucked the grass that grew by her shoulder.

The small dark head under his nostrils: a small round stone, that smelt human, black hair growing from it:

230

The skull shut the light in: it was not possible for any eyes
To know what throbbed and shone under the sutures of the skull, or a shell full of lightning
Had scared the roan strength, and he'd have broken tether, screaming, and run for the valley.

The atom bounds-breaking,
Nucleus to sun, electrons to planets, with recognition
Not praying, self-equaling, the whole to the whole, the microcosm
Not entering nor accepting entrance, more equally, more utterly, more incredibly conjugate
With the other extreme and greatness; passionately perceptive of identity. . . .

The fire threw up figures
And symbols meanwhile, racial myths formed and dissolved in it, the phantom rulers of humanity

That without being are yet more real than what they are born of, and without shape, shape that which makes them:

The nerves and the flesh go by shadowlike, the limbs and the lives shadowlike, these shadows remain, these shadows

240

To whom temples, to whom churches, to whom labors and wars, visions and dreams are dedicate:

Out of the fire in the small round stone that black moss covered, a crucified man writhed up in anguish;

A woman covered by a huge beast in whose mane the stars were netted, sun and moon were his eyeballs,

Smiled under the unendurable violation, her throat swollen with the storm and blood-flecks gleaming

On the stretched lips; a woman—no, a dark water, split by jets of lightning, and after a season

What floated up out of the furrowed water, a boat, a fish, a fire-globe?

It had wings, the creature,
And flew against the fountain of lightning, fell burnt out of the cloud back to the bottomless water . . .

Figures and symbols, castlings of the fire, played in her brain; but the white fire was the essence,

The burning in the small round shell of bone that black hair covered, that lay by the hooves on the hilltop.

She rose at length, she unknotted the halter; she walked and led the stallion; two figures, woman and stallion,

250

Came down the silent emptiness of the dome of the hill, under the cataract of the moonlight.

The next night there was moon through cloud Johnny had returned half drunk
 toward evening, and California
 Who had known him for years with neither love nor loathing to-night hating him
 had let the child Christine
 Play in the light of the lamp for hours after her bedtime, who fell asleep at length
 on the floor
 Beside the dog, then Johnny "Put her to bed" She gathered the child against her
 breasts, she laid her
 In the next room, and covered her with a blanket The window was white, the
 moon had risen. The mother
 Lay down by the child, but after a moment Johnny stood in the doorway "Come
 drink" He had brought home
 Two jugs of wine slung from the saddle, part payment for the stallion's service, a
 pitcher of it
 Was on the table, and California sadly came and emptied her glass Whiskey, she
 thought,
 Would have erased him till to-morrow, the thin red wine "We have a good
 evening," he laughed, pouring it 260
 "One glass yet then I show you what the red fellow did" She moving toward the
 house-door his eyes
 Followed her, the glass filled and the red juice ran over the table When it struck
 the floor-planks
 He heard and looked. "Who stuck the pig?" he muttered stupidly, "here's blood,
 here's blood," and trailed his fingers
 In the red lake under the lamplight. While he was looking down the door creaked,
 she had slipped outdoors,
 And he, his mouth curving like a faun's imagined the chase under the solemn red-
 woods, the panting
 And unsuspecting victim caught in a dark corner He emptied the glass and went
 outdoors
 Into the dappled lanes of moonlight No sound but the April brook's. "Hey Bruno,"
 he called, "find her
 Bruno, go find her" The dog after a little understood and quested, the man fol-
 lowing
 When California crouching by an oak-bush above the house heard them come near
 she darted
 To the open slope and ran down hill. The dog barked at her heels, pleased with the
 game, and Johnny 270
 Followed in silence. She ran down to the new corral, she saw the stallion
 Move like a lion along the timbers of the fence, the dark arched neck shaking the
 nightfall
 Of the great mane; she threw herself prone and writhed under the bars, his hooves
 backing away from her
 Made muffled thunder in the soft soil. She stood in the midst of the corral, panting,
 but Johnny
 Paused at the fence. The dog ran under it, and seeing the stallion move, the woman
 standing quiet,
 Danced after the beast, with white-tooth feints and dashes When Johnny saw the
 formidable dark strength

Recoil from the dog, he climbed up over the fence.
 The child Christine waked when her mother left her
 And lay half dreaming, in the half-waking dream she saw the ocean come up out of
 the west
 And cover the world, she looked up through clear water at the tops of the red-
 woods. She heard the door creak 280
 And the house empty; her heart shook her body, sitting up on the bed, and she
 heard the dog
 And crept toward light, where it gleamed under the crack of the door. She opened
 the door, the room was empty,
 The table-top was a red lake under the lamplight. The color of it was terrible to her;
 She had seen the red juice drip from a coyote's muzzle her father had shot one day
 in the hills
 And carried him home over the saddle: she looked at the rifle on the wall-rack:
 it was not moved:
 She ran to the door, the dog was barking and the moon was shining: she knew wine
 by the odor
 But the color frightened her, the empty house frightened her, she followed down
 hill in the white lane of moonlight
 The friendly noise of the dog. She saw in the big horse's corral, on the level shoulder
 of the hill,
 Black on white, the dark strength of the beast, the dancing fury of the dog, and
 the two others.
 One fled, one followed; the big one charged, rearing; one fell under his fore-hooves.
 She heard her mother 290
 Scream: without thought she ran to the house, she dragged a chair past the red
 pool and climbed to the rifle,
 Got it down from the wall and lugged it somehow through the door and down the
 hillside, under the hard weight
 Sobbing. Her mother stood by the rails of the corral, she gave it to her. On the far
 side
 The dog flashed at the plunging stallion; in the midst of the space the man, slow-
 moving, like a hurt worm
 Crawling, dragged his body by inches toward the fence-line. Then California,
 resting the rifle
 On the top rail, without doubting, without hesitance,
 Aimed for the leaping body of the dog, and when it stood, fired. It snapped, rolled
 over, lay quiet.
 "O mother you've hit Bruno!" "I couldn't see the sights in the moonlight," she
 answered quietly. She stood
 And watched, resting the rifle-butt on the ground. The stallion wheeled, freed from
 his torment, the man
 Lurched up to his knees, wailing a thin and bitter bird's cry, and the roan thunder 300
 Struck; hooves left nothing alive but teeth tore up the remnant. "O mother, shoot,
 shoot!" Yet California
 Stood carefully watching, till the beast having fed all his fury stretched neck to
 utmost, head high,
 And wrinkled back the upper lip from the teeth, yawning obscene disgust over—
 not a man—

A smear on the moon-like earth then California moved by some obscure human
 fidelity
 Lifted the rifle Each separate nerve-cell of her brain flaming the stars fell from
 their places
 Crying in her mind she fired three times before the haunches crumpled sidewise,
 the forelegs stiffening,
 And the beautiful strength settled to earth. she turned then on her little daughter
 the mask of a woman
 Who has killed God. The night-wind veering, the smell of the spilt wine drifted
 down hill from the house

1925

*Shine, Perishing Republic*²

While this America settles in the mould of its vulgarity, heavily thickening to
 empire,
 And protest, only a bubble in the molten mass, pops and sighs out, and the mass
 hardens,
 I sadly smiling remember that the flower fades to make fruit, the fruit rots to make
 earth.
 Out of the mother, and through the spring exultances, ripeness and decadence, and
 home to the mother.
 You making haste haste on decay not blameworthy; life is good, be it stubbornly
 long or suddenly
 A mortal splendor: meteors are not needed less than mountains shine, perishing
 republic
 But for my children, I would have them keep their distance from the thickening
 center; corruption
 Never has been compulsory, when the cities lie at the monster's feet there are left
 the mountains.
 And boys, be in nothing so moderate as in love of man, a clever servant, insufferable
 master.
 There is the trap that catches noblest spirits, that caught—they say—God, when
 he walked on earth.

10

1925

Science

Man, introverted man, having crossed
 In passage and but a little with the nature of things this latter century
 Has begot giants, but being taken up
 Like a maniac with self-love and inward conflicts cannot manage his hybrids.
 Being used to deal with edgeless dreams,
 Now he's bred knives on nature turns them also inward: they have thirsty points
 though.

² This and the following poem are from *Roan Stallion* by Robinson Jeffers Copyright 1935 by the Modern Library. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

His mind forebodes his own destruction;
 Actæon³ who saw the goddess naked among leaves and his hounds tore^{*} him.
 A little knowledge, a pebble from the shingle,
 A drop from the oceans: who would have dreamed this infinitely little too much? 10
 1925

FROM

Cawdor

(1928)

*Hurt Hawks*⁴

I

The broken pillar of the wing jags from the clotted shoulder,
 The wing trails like a banner in defeat,
 No more to use the sky forever but live with famine
 And pain a few days: cat nor coyote
 Will shorten the week of waiting for death, there is game without talons.
 He stands under the oak-bush and waits
 The lame feet of salvation; at night he remembers freedom
 And flies in a dream, the dawns ruin it.
 He is strong and pain is worse to the strong, incapacity is worse.
 The curs of the day come and torment him 10
 At distance, no one but death the redeemer will humble that head,
 The intrepid readiness, the terrible eyes.
 The wild God of the world is sometimes merciful to those
 That ask mercy, not often to the arrogant.
 You do not know him, you communal people, or you have forgotten him;
 Intemperate and savage, the hawk remembers him;
 Beautiful and wild, the hawks, and men that are dying, remember him.

II

I'd sooner, except the penalties, kill a man than a hawk; but the great redtail
 Had nothing left but unable misery
 From the bone too shattered for mending, the wing that trailed under his talons
 when he moved. 20
 We had fed him six weeks, I gave him freedom,
 He wandered over the foreland hill and returned in the evening, asking for death,
 Not like a beggar, still cycled with the old
 Implacable arrogance. I gave him the lead gift in the twilight. What fell was relaxed,
 Owl-downy, soft feminine feathers; but what
 Soared: the fierce rush: the night-herons by the flooded river cried fear at its rising
 Before it was quite unsheathed from reality.

1928

³In Greek mythology a huntsman saw Diana bathing. She changed him into a stag, which his hounds killed.

⁴From *Cawdor*. Copyright 1928 by Robinson Jeffers. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

FROM

Solstice and Other Poems

(1935)

*Love the Wild Swan*⁵

"I hate my verses, every line, every word
 Oh pale and brittle pencils ever to try
 One grass-blade's curve, or the throat of one bird
 That clings to twig, ruffled against white sky
 Oh cracked and twilight mirrors ever to catch
 One color, one glinting flash, of the splendor of things
 Unlucky hunter, Oh bullets of wax,
 The lion beauty, the wild-swan wings, the storm of the wings"
 —This wild swan of a world is no hunter's game
 Better bullets than yours would miss the white breast,
 Better mirrors than yours would crack in the flame
 Does it matter whether you hate your . . . self? At least
 Love your eyes that can see, your mind that can
 Hear the music, the thunder of the wings. Love the wild swan

10

FROM

Such Counsels You Gave to Me

(1937)

*Self-Criticism in February*⁶

The bay is not blue but sombre yellow
 With wrack from the battered valley, it is speckled with violent foam-heads
 And tiger-striped with long lovely storm-shadows
*You love this better than the other mask, better eyes than yours
 Would feel the equal beauty in the blue
 It is certain you have loved the beauty of storm disproportionately
 But the present time is not pastoral, but founded
 On violence, pointed for more massive violence. perhaps it is not
 Perversity but need that perceives the storm-beauty.
 Well, bite on this: your poems are too full of ghosts and demons,
 And people like phantoms—how often life's are—
 And passion so stained that the clay mouths go praying for destruction—
 Alas, it is not unusual in life,
 To every soul at some time But why insist on it? And now
 For the worst fault: you have never mistaken
 Demon nor passion nor idealism for the real God
 Then what is most disliked in those verses
 Remains most true. Unfortunately If only you could sing
 That God is love, or perhaps that social
 Justice will soon prevail I can tell lies in prose.*

10

1937

⁵ From *Solstice and Other Poems* by Robinson Jeffers. Copyright 1935 by Robinson Jeffers. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

⁶ From *Such Counsels You Gave to Me* by Robinson Jeffers. Copyright 1937 by Random House, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

T. S. ELIOT (1888-)

T[homas] S[tearns] Eliot was born at St. Louis, Missouri, in a family proud of its New England ancestry. He attended Harvard, where he received an A.B. degree in 1909 and an A.M. in 1911. After leaving Harvard he studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and Merton College at Oxford. He has lived in England since 1913, where he has taught, worked in Lloyd's bank, served as critic for the *Athenaeum* and the *Times Literary Supplement*, been on the editorial staff of the *Egoist*, and edited a distinguished quarterly review, the *Criterion*. He married in England, and became a British subject in 1927. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," written at Harvard, was published in Miss Harriet Monroe's *Poetry*. *The Waste Land* won the Dial prize in 1922 and brought Eliot into literary prominence. In *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928) and *Ash Wednesday* (1930) he asserted his allegiance to the Church of England, and a few years later he wrote two verse dramas with religious significance, *The Rock* (1934) and *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), the latter about Thomas à Becket. Eliot has also written several volumes of critical essays. *After Strange Gods* (1934) was delivered as lectures at the University of Virginia. His

Harvard lectures were published as *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933). But an earlier volume, *The Sacred Wood* (1920), is usually regarded as his best collection. He has also written critical studies of Dante, Shakespeare, Dryden, and Ezra Pound. Mr. Eliot was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948.

Eliot's collected volumes of poetry include: *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917); *Poems* (1919); *Poems* (1920); *The Waste Land* (1922); *Ash Wednesday* (1930); *Collected Poems: 1909-1935* (1936); *The Rock*, a pageant (1934); *Murder in the Cathedral*, drama in verse (1935); *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, light verse (1939); and *Four Quartets* (1943). Also indispensable to the student of Eliot is his *Selected Essays: 1917-1932* (1932). Critical interpretations of Eliot's poetry: H. R. Williamson, *The Poetry of T. S. Eliot*, New York, 1933; F. O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot*, Boston, 1935; B. Rajan, ed., *T. S. Eliot: A Study of His Writings by Several Hands*, London, 1947; Leonard Ungcr, ed., *T. S. Eliot: A Selected Critique*, New York, 1948.

FROM

Prufrock and Other Observations

(1917) ¹

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock ²

S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.³

¹ The following poems are from *Collected Poems*, by T. S. Eliot, copyright 1936 by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., and reprinted by the kind permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company.

² This poem, written in Eliot's early period of disillusionment, exhibits a painfully self-conscious, inhibited person intended to

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,

typify the age. Prufrock has imagination and intelligence, but he is comical in his frustration and indecision. The poet, both sympathetic and disapproving, resorts to irony.

³ Spoken by a soul in Hell, to Dante, *Inferno*, XXVII, 61-66. C. E. Norton's translation: "If I could believe that my answer might be to a person who should ever return into the world, this flame would stand without more quiverings; but inasmuch as, if I hear the truth, never from this depth did any living man return, without fear of infamy I answer thee."

The muttering cats
 Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
 And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells
 Streets that follow like a tedious argument
 Of insidious intent
 To lead you to an overwhelming question.
 Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
 Let us go and make our visit

In the room the women come and go
 Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the
 window-panes,
 The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the
 window-panes
 Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
 Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
 Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from
 chimneys,
 Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
 And seeing that it was a soft October night,
 Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
 For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
 Rubbing its back upon the window-panes,
 There will be time, there will be time
 To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet,
 There will be time to murder and create,
 And time for all the works and days of hands
 That lift and drop a question on your plate,
 Time for you and time for me,
 And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
 And for a hundred visions and revisions,
 Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
 Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
 To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
 Time to turn back and descend the stair,
 With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
 [They will say, "How his hair is growing thin!"]
 My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to
 the chin,
 My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a
 simple pin—
 [They will say: "But how his arms and legs are
 thin!"]

Do I dare
 Disturb the universe?
 In a minute there is time
 For decisions and revisions which a minute will
 reverse

10 For I have known them all already, known them
 all —
 Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons, 50
 I have measured out my life with coffee spoons,
 I know the voices dying with a dying fall
 Beneath the music from a farther room
 So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them
 all—
 The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
 And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
 When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
 Then how should I begin
 20 To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and
 ways?
 And how should I presume? 60

And I have known the arms already, known them
 all—
 Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
 [But in the lamplight, downed with light brown
 hair!]
 Is it perfume from a dress
 That makes me so digress?
 30 Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl
 And should I then presume?
 And how should I begin?

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow
 streets 70
 And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
 Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of
 windows? . . .

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
 40 Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peace-
 fully!
 Smoothed by long fingers,
 Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,
 Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.

Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its
crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and
prayed,
Though I have seen my head [grown slightly
bald] brought in upon a platter,⁴
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my
coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you
and me,

Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—⁵
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the
sprinkled streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the
skirts that trail along the floor—

And this, and so much more?—
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in
patterns on a screen:
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
"That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant, at all."

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant
to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do

To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence,⁶ but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old . . . I grow old . . .
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a
peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon
the beach.

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and
brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

1917

*Portrait of a Lady*⁷

*Thou hast committed—
Fornication: but that was in another country,
And besides, the wench is dead.
The Jew of Malta.*

I

Among the smoke and fog of a December
afternoon
You have the scene arrange itself—as it will
seem to do—

With "I have saved this afternoon for you";
And four wax candles in the darkened room,
Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead,
An atmosphere of Juliet's tomb
Prepared for all the things to be said, or left
unsaid.

We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole
Transmit the Preludes, through his hair and
fingertips.

⁶ "Full of meaning, wisdom"—phrase applied to the speech
of the Clerk in Chaucer's Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, I,
306.

⁷ Published in *Prufrock and Other Observations*, London,
1917, and *Poems*, New York, 1920.

⁴ The head of John the Baptist was brought to Herod on a
platter—see Matthew xiv:1-11.

⁵ Cf. John xi:44.

'So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul
Should be resurrected only among friends
Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom
That is rubbed and questioned in the concert
room"

—And so the conversation slips
Among volleys and carefully caught regrets
Through attenuated tones of violins
Mingled with remote cornets
And begins

"You do not know how much they mean to me,
my friends,
And how, how rare and strange it is, to find
In a life composed so much, so much of odds and
ends,
[For indeed I do not love it . . . you knew? you
are not blind!]

How keen you are!]
To find a friend who has these qualities,
Who has, and gives
Those qualities upon which friendship lives.
How much it means that I say this to you—
Without these friendships—life, what
cauchemar!"⁸

Among the windings of the violins
And the anetics
Of cracked cornets
Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins
Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own,
Capricious monotone
That is at least one definite "false note"
—Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,
Admire the monuments,
Discuss the late events,
Correct our watches by the public clocks
Then sit for half an hour and drink our boots.

II

Now that lilacs are in bloom
She has a bowl of lilacs in her room
And twists one in her fingers while she talks
"Ah, my friend, you do not know, you do not
know
What life is, you who hold it in your hands";
(Slowly twisting the lilac stalks)
"You let it flow from you, you let it flow,
And youth is cruel, and has no remorse

⁸ French, "nightmare"

And smiles at situations which it cannot see"
I smile, of course,
And go on drinking tea
"Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall
My buried life, and Paris in the Spring,
I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world
To be wonderful and youthful, after all."

The voice returns like the insistent out-of-tune
Of a broken violin on an August afternoon
"I am always sure that you understand
My feelings, always sure that you feel,
Sure that across the gulf you reach your hand

You are invulnerable, you have no Achilles' heel
You will go on, and when you have prevailed
You can say at this point many a one has failed
But what have I, but what have I, my friend,
To give you, what can you receive from me?
Only the friendship and the sympathy
Of one about to reach her journey's end.

I shall sit here, serving tea to friends . . . "

I take my hat how can I make a cowardly amends
For what she has said to me?
You will see me any morning in the park
Reading the comics and the sporting page.
Particularly I remark
An English countess goes upon the stage
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,
Another bank defaulter has confessed
I keep my countenance,
I remain self-possessed
Except when a street piano, mechanical and tired
Reiterates some worn-out common song
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden
Recalling things that other people have desired.
Are these ideas right or wrong?

III

The October night comes down; returning as
before
Except for a slight sensation of being ill at ease
I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door
And feel as if I had mounted on my hands and
knees.

"And so you are going abroad; and when do you
return?

But that's a useless question.

You hardly know when you are coming back,

You will find so much to learn."
 My smile falls heavily among the bric-à-brac.
 "Perhaps you can write to me."
 My self-possession flares up for a second;
This is as I had reckoned.
 "I have been wondering frequently of late
 (But our beginnings never know our ends!)
 Why we have not developed into friends."
 I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall
 remark
 Suddenly, his expression in a glass. 100
 My self-possession gutters; we are really in the
 dark.
 "For everybody said so, all our friends,
 They all were sure our feelings would relate
 So closely! I myself can hardly understand.
 We must leave it now to fate.
 You will write, at any rate.
 Perhaps it is not too late.
 I shall sit here, serving tea to friends."

And I must borrow every changing shape
 To find expression . . . dance, dance 110
 Like a dancing bear,
 Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.
 Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance—

Well! and what if she should die some afternoon,
 Afternoon grey and smoky, evening yellow and
 rose;
 Should die and leave me sitting pen in hand
 With the smoke coming down above the house-
 tops;
 Doubtful, for a while
 Not knowing what to feel or if I understand
 Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too
 soon . . . 120
 Would she not have the advantage, after all?
 This music is successful with a "dying fall"
 Now that we talk of dying—
 And should I have the right to smile?
 1917

FROM
Poems
 (1920)

*Gerontion*⁹

*Thou hast nor youth nor age
 But as it were an after dinner sleep
 Dreaming of both.*¹⁰

Here I am, an old man in a dry month,
 Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.
 I was neither at the hot gates
 Nor fought in the warm rain
 Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
 Bitten by flies, fought.

My house is a decayed house,
 And the Jew squats on the window sill, the
 owner,
 Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
 Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in
 London. 10
 The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;
 Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.
 The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,
 Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.
 I an old man,
 A dull head among windy spaces.

Signs are taken for wonders. "We would see a
 sign!"
 The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
 Swaddled with darkness. In the juvenescence of the
 year
 Came Christ the tiger
 In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut,
 flowering Judas, 20

⁹ Though dated 1919, "Gerontion" actually appeared in *Poems*, London and New York, 1920.

The title probably comes from the French comic character, *Géronte*, a ridiculous old man. Leavis, in *New Bearings in English Poetry* (London, 1932), says: "The poem opens with what is to be a recurrent theme of Mr. Eliot's: the mixing of 'memory and desire' in present barrenness. The old man in his 'dry month,' waiting for the life-giving 'rain' that he knows will never come, is stirred to envy, then to poignant recollection by the story of hot-blooded vitality, which contrasts with the squalor of his actual surrounding. Youthful desire mingles in memory with the most exalted emotions, those associated with the mysteries of religion." See also F. O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* (Boston, 1935), p. 62.

¹⁰ Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, III, 1, 32-34.

To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk
Among whispers, by Mr Silvero
With caressing hands, at Limoges
Who walked all night in the next room,

By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titans,
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room
Shifting the candles, Fraulein von Kulp
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door
Vacant shuttles
Weave the wind I have no ghosts,
An old man in a draughty house
Under a windy knob

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think
now

History has many cunning passages, contrived
corridors

And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities Think now

She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple
confusions

That the giving famishes the craving Gives too
late

What's not believed in, or if still believed, 40
In memory only, reconsidered passion Gives too
soon

Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed
with

Till the refusal propagates a fear Think
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing
tree.

The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours.
Think at last

We have not reached conclusion, when I 50
Stiffen in a rented house. Think at last
I have not made this show purposelessly
And it is not by any concitation
Of the backward devils

I would meet you upon this honestly.
I that was near your heart was removed therefrom
To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition
I have lost my passion. why should I need to
keep it

Since what is kept must be adulterated?

I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and
touch 60

How should I use them for your closer contact?

These with a thousand small deliberations
Protract the profit of their chilled delirium,
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,
With pungent sauces, multiply variety
In a wilderness of mirrors. What will the spider
do,

30 Suspend its operations, will the weevil
Delay? De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs Cammel,
whirled

Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear
In fractured atoms Gull against the wind, in
the windy straits 70

Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,
White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims,
And an old man driven by the Trades
To a sleepy corner

Tenants of the house,
Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season

1920

*The Hippopotamus*¹¹

*Similiter et omnes revereantur Diaconos, ut mandatum
Jesu Christi, et Episcopum, ut Jesum Christum, existentem
filium Patris, Presbyterios autem, ut concilium Dei et con-
junctionem Apostolorum. Sine his Ecclesia non vocatur, de
quibus suadeo vos sic habeo*

S IGNATII AD TRALLIANOS¹²

*And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be
read also in the church of the Laodiceans.*¹³

The broad-backed hippopotamus
Rests on his belly in the mud,
Although he seems so firm to us
He is merely flesh and blood.

Flesh and blood is weak and frail,
Susceptible to nervous shock,
While the True Church can never fail
For it is based upon a rock.

¹¹ This satirical poem, published in *Poems* (1920), is a para-
phrase of a poem by Theophile Gautier. It was composed before
Eliot became Anglo-Catholic.

¹² "In like manner let all reverence the Deacons as Jesus
Christ, and the Bishops as the Father, and the Presbyters as the
council of God, and the assembly of the Apostles. Without these
there is no Church. Concerning all which I am persuaded that
ye think after the same manner." Chevallier translation, "The
Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians," *Epistles of Ignatius*, London,
1833.

¹³ Colossians 14.16.

The hippo's feeble steps may err
In compassing material ends,
While the True Church need never stir
To gather in its dividends.

The 'potamus can never reach
The mango on the mango-tree;
But fruits of pomegranate and peach
Refresh the Church from over sea.

At mating time the hippo's voice
Betrays inflexions hoarse and odd,
But every week we hear rejoice
The Church, at being one with God.

The hippopotamus's day
Is passed in sleep; at night he hunts;

God works in a mysterious way—
10 The Church can sleep and feed at once.

I saw the 'potamus take wing
Ascending from the damp savannas,
And quiring angels round him sing
The praise of God, in loud hosannas.

Blood of the Lamb shall wash him clean ¹⁴
And him shall heavenly arms enfold, 30
Among the saints he shall be seen
Performing on a harp of gold.

20 He shall be washed as white as snow,
By all the martyr'd virgins kist,
While the True Church remains below
Wrapt in the old miasmal mist.

FROM

The Rock ¹⁵
(1934)

II

Thus your fathers were made
Fellow citizens of the saints, of the household of
god, being built upon the foundation
Of apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself
the chief cornerstone.

But you, have you built well, that you now sit
helpless in a ruined house?

Where many are born to idleness, to frittered
lives and squalid deaths, embittered scorn in
honey-hives,

And those who would build and restore turn out
the palms of their hands, or look in vain
towards foreign lands for alms to be more
or the urn to be filled.

Your building not fitly framed together, you sit
ashamed and wonder whether and how you
may be builded together for a habitation of
god in the Spirit, the Spirit which moved
on the face of the waters like a lantern set
on the back of a tortoise.

And some say: "How can we love our neighbour?
For love must be made real in act, as desire

unites with desired; we have only our labour
to give and our labour is not required.

We wait on corners, with nothing to bring but
the songs we can sing which nobody wants
to hear sung;

Waiting to be flung in the end, on a heap less
useful than dung." 10

You, have you built well, have you forgotten the
cornerstone?

Talking of right relations of men, but not of
relations of men to god.

"Our citizenship is in Heaven"; yes, but that is
the model and type for your citizenship upon
earth.

When your fathers fixed the place of god,
And settled all the inconvenient saints,
Apostles, martyrs, in a kind of Whipsnade,
Then they could set about imperial expansion
Accompanied by industrial development.

Exporting iron, coal and cotton goods
And intellectual enlightenment 20
And everything, including capital
And several versions of the Word of god:
The British race assured of a mission
Performed it, but left much at home unsure.

Of all that was done in the past, you eat the fruit,
either rotten or ripe.

¹⁴ Cf. Revelation vii:14.

¹⁵ The second chorus in a religion drama, *The Rock*, by
T. S. Eliot, copyright 1934 by Harcourt, Brace and Company,
Inc.

And the Church must be forever building, and
 always decaying, and always being restored
 For every ill deed in the past we suffer the
 consequence:
 For sloth, for avarice, gluttony, neglect of the
 Word of God,
 For pride, for lechery, treachery, for every act of
 sin
 And of all that was done that was good, you have
 the inheritance
 For good and ill deeds belong to a man alone,
 when he stands alone on the other side of
 death,
 But here upon earth you have the reward of the
 good and ill that was done by those who
 have gone before you
 And all that is ill you may repair if you walk
 together in humble repentance, expiating the
 sins of your fathers,
 And all that was good you must fight to keep with
 hearts as devoted as those of your fathers
 who fought to gain it
 The Church must be forever building, for it is
 forever decaying within and attacked from
 without;
 For this is the law of life, and you must remember
 that while there is time of prosperity

30

The people will neglect the Temple, and in time
 of adversity they will decry it.

What life have you if you have not life together?
 There is no life that is not in community,
 And no community not lived in praise of God 40
 Even the anchorite who meditates alone,
 For whom the days and nights repeat the praise
 of God,
 Prays for the Church, the Body of Christ
 incarnate.

And now you have dispersed on ribbon roads,
 And no man knows or cares who is his neighbour
 Unless his neighbour makes too much disturbance,
 But all dash to and fro in motor cars,
 Familiar with the roads and settled nowhere
 Nor does the family even move about together,
 But every son would have his motor cycle, 50
 And daughters ride away on casual pillions

Much to cast down, much to build, much to
 restore,
 Let the work not delay, time and the aim not
 waste;
 Let the clay be dug from the pit, let the saw cut
 the stone,
 Let the fire not be quenched in the forge

1934

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